HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

(To be placed in Original Copy)

The undersigned, appointed by the

Division

Department

Committee on The Study of Religion

have examined a thesis entitled

The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism: A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

presented by Douglas Renfrew Brooks

candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

Signature Diana L. Eck

Typed name Diana L. Eck

Signature John B. Carman

Typed name John B. Carman, Chr.

Signature Gary A. Tubb

Typed name Gary A. Tubb

Date 13 January 1987

The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism:
A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

A thesis presented

by

Douglas Renfrew Brooks

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
The Study of Religion

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
March, 1987

ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an historical and theological study of one of the major sects of Hindu Śākta Tantrism. The Śrīvidyā school has flourished in India since at least the seventh century, C. E. and presents one of the most elaborate forms of the esoteric worship of the goddess in a beneficent aspect in Hindu tradition.

This study proceeds from the assumption that Hindu Tantrism is best understood as a sectarian regional phenomenon reflecting pan-Indian values and concepts, an assumption reflecting Tantrics' own understandings. It further accepts that any historical, theological or textual study must also include interpretive input from the living oral traditions since Tantrics have deliberately obscured materials in order to limit access to initiated followers.

The study focuses on the Śrīvidyā school in south India, and in Tamil Nāḍu in particular. Part One traces the historical development of the school from the earliest available sources in Sanskrit and Tamil, including references to its specific mantra (sound identified with the deity) and yantra (geometric form of the deity) by the sixth century Tamil saint Tirumūlar. The theologgical understanding of the goddess in her beneficent anthropomorphic forms as Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the mantra

known as the <u>śrīvidyā</u> and the complex configuration known as the <u>śrīcakra</u> are treated exhaustively.

Part Two examines the historical and theological material as it is interpreted and practiced by contemporary Srividya adepts in Tamil Nāḍu. It includes case studies of five specific lineages and of a number of individual adepts: its primary focus is Śrīvidyā's practice and interpretation in both private and public settings, including its presence in several major Śaiva temples.

Issues such as the role of authority and ritual symbolism and the concept of scripture are raised in the course of both Parts One and Two.

An Appendix includes a translation of the <u>Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya</u> of Bhāskararāya with critical notes, annotations and emendations that correct previous editions of the text. This small but important source presents a summary of many of the central issues within Śrīvidyā tradition and continues to play a role in contemporary forms of faith.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

To My
Teacher and Parents

Wesenheiten werden in der Gegenwart gelebt,
Gegenständlichkeiten in der Vergangenheit.

---Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*

Abbreviations

I. Sanskrit and Tamil Sources

BY	Brahma Yāmala
JT	Jñānārṇava Tantra
KKV	Kāmakalāvilāsa
KT	Kulārṇava Tantra
LAC	Lalitārcancacandrikā
LSN	Lalitāsahasranāma
LTS	Lalitātrīśatī
LTSB	Lalitātriśatibhāṣya
MBh	Mahābhārata
MAM	Mahārthamañjarī
NS	Nityotsava
NSA	Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava
PKS	Paraśurāmakalpasūtra
PS	Prapañcasāra
RV	Ṛg Veda
RY	Rudra Yāmala
SL	Saundaryalaharī
SRA	Saubhāgyaratnākāra
SST	Ṣaktisaṃgamatantra
ST	Śāradātilaka
SVA	Śrīvidyārṇava Tantra
TA	Tantrāloka
TR	Tripurārahasya
TTU	Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad
TRT	Tantrarāja Tantra
VT	Vāmakeśvara Tantra
VVR	Varivasyarahasya
YH	Yoginīhṛdaya
YT	Yoginī Tantra

II. Other Abbreviations

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
ALS	Ādyar Library Series
ASS/AnS	Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, Poona
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, Paris
CHI	Cultural History of India
CSS	Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series
Gonda	"The Indian Mantra" by Jan Gonda
GOS	Gaekwad Oriental Series
HT	Hindu Tantrism, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979 (Handbuch der Orientalistik)

HTSL	Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1981 (A History of Indian Lit., II-2)
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IIJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
KSS	Kāśī Sanskrit Series
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, Śrīnagar
Ms(s).	Manuscript(s)
NCC	New Catalogus Catalogorum
Padoux	Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie...by A. Padoux
Pandey	Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study by K.C. Pandey
PEW	Philosophy East and West, Honolulu
PWSBT	Prince of Wales Saraswati Bhavan Texts, Varanasi
RASB	Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
Rastogi	Krama Tantricism of Kashmir by N. Rastogi
SBG	Saraswati Bhavan Granthamala
Skt	Sanskrit
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd und Ostäsiens, Wien
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesallschaft, Leipzig, Wiesbaden
ZMR	Zeitschrift fur Missionwissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft, Munster, Westfalen

N.B. Works of authors receive full citation in the Bibliography.

Introduction

A. Introductory Remarks

There is perhaps no subject in Indian religious studies more maligned or neglected than Hindu Tantrism. Western and Ind' n scholars have rarely displayed the sympathy or disinterested curiosity for Tantric materials they have for other forms of Indian faith.[1]

Tantrism's penchant for erotic symbolism and challenges to conventional mores make for emotional and sometimes vitriolic discussions among historical and contemporary proponents and detractors. In south Indian vernacular languages, for example, the very word "tantra" conjures images of moral depravity and destructive magic.[2]

The central concern of this study is a Tantric sect that for centuries has debated internally controversial theological interpretations and practices. The sect is known popularly as Śrīvidyā, literally "Auspicious Wisdom" or the "Wisdom of [the Goddess] Śrī", and is one of the major schools within Hindu Śākta Tantrism.[3] The principal concern of this study is to present Śrīvidyā's theology and practice by considering literary and oral sources, historical developments and the living traditions in contemporary south India. Śrīvidyā is not only one of the clearest systematic forms of Śākta Tantrism but deeply

influences non-Tantric Hinduism, especially through its distinctive ritual elements and the legacy of its leading historical proponents.

The study naturally divides into three aspects: (1) historical and theological studies, (2) living and practical interpretations and (3) primary textual sources. Part One considers Śrīvidyā's historical and theological definitions and emphasizes materials which have had a particular impact upon contemporary oral and living traditions in south India; Part Two examines living south Indian Śrīvidyā, especially in Tamil Nāḍu among high-caste proponents, and focuses on the interpretation of historical and theological sources in practice. A broad theological definition of Hindu Tantrism is refined through the emerging picture of Śrīvidyā's historical development and contemporary interpretation. The textual component of the present study includes extensive references to the tradition's Sanskrit sources and the translation of one such source with the commentary of an influential historical proponent (included as an Appendix).

This presentation differs from earlier efforts by focusing on a particular sect within a specific regional context. Tantric tradition itself has created regional, sub-traditions within larger established Śākta sects such as Śrīvidyā. The present effort begins with this premise.[4] A regional emphasis sufficiently narrows the scope of the

study and allows more detailed consideration of actual practice. It also provides a strong basis for cross-regional comparison, an aspect of Tantric studies often mentioned but rarely undertaken.

Like all esoteric forms of Hindu faith, Śrīvidyā's historical and textual developments are fully appreciated only in light of oral and living traditions. As with other Tantric sects, Śrīvidyā's theology and ritual is presented in highly technical and sometimes purposefully obscure language. Without access to living interpretations an understanding of the tradition's practices would remain, at best, only partial. While one must not accept the interpretations of its contemporary adepts uncritically, one cannot hope to understand its practiced faith without taking seriously what these living proponents say and do.[5]

A regional approach to a particular Tantric sect would itself be enough to set apart the present effort from other recent scholarship. Methodologically, the fundamental stance is that of the historian of religion employing techniques familiar to history, philology, theology and social anthropology; these are used to create a basis for understanding religion in a comparative perspective. The present study's primary subjects for comparison are other Śākta Tantric schools and Hindu sects and the overarching concern is the influence of Śrīvidyā on the larger community

of faith. I have not ventured far from these incipient points of comparison since even this limited area remains relatively unexplored.[6] In addition, several major themes in the history of religions are explored including the roles of myth, ritual and philosophy and their relationship to the salvific process.

The study is scientific in orientation inasmuch as it claims to present facts and interpretations without emotional or cultural prejudice; it relies on original sources, first-hand observations and a scrutiny of available scholarship. It is not merely a descriptive presentation of the sect's history, beliefs and practices but rather an investigation of faith. This investigation centers on concepts and values directly involving the human beings for whom they provide religious meaning.[7] Thus, the enquiry's intent is to extend beyond historical and abstract theoretical sources and into the lives of contemporary practitioners reflecting and embodying Śrīvidyā tradition.

In Hindu Tantrism the study of living traditions is especially relevant not only because it is rarely attempted but because historical and literary studies present so few clues for understanding actual forms of practice.[8] While the conclusions reached regarding scriptural interpretation and ritual practices may not extend far beyond the parameters of Tantric studies, the ways in which Śrīvidyā

adepts integrate the sect's ideas and practices into the mainstreams of Hindu life provides a deeper understanding of Indian religion.

For all Tantrics the situation in recent times has changed radically. Textual sources once privately and secretly circulated among initiates are now openly available in libraries or in printed editions. This new situation has not gone unnoticed by traditionalists who both welcome and lament the changes.[9] Literary studies of Tantric sources begun in the nineteenth century have progressed little since then in comparison to other fields in Indian religious studies.[10] Recent efforts have only begun to redress the deficiencies of past scholarly neglect and only a few have brought living Tantrism under serious, systematic scrutiny.[11]

B. Recent Scholarship in Hindu Tantrism, the Present Study and Developing Methodologies

Editions of Tantric sources in Sanskrit as well as textual studies in Indian and European languages are now becoming increasingly available. Several are worthy of commendation for their assiduous editing and clear presentation.[12] This movement towards greater sophistication in Tantric scholarship is abundantly clear in the study of Buddhist traditions, especially in Tibetan

forms, though regrettably less true of Hindu Tantrism in any of its sectarian manifestations.[13] The vast majority of Sanskrit sources remain either in manuscript or without careful editing.[14]

The most significant recent scholarly contributions in Hindu Tantrism have been made by Teun Goudriaan, Sanjukta Gupta and Dirk Jan Hoens, working separately and in collaboration.[15] The value of their efforts cannot be underestimated but neither should their opinions be deemed conclusive, as they themselves readily acknowledge.[16] Without the luxury of fastidious scholarship preceding them their work is groundbreaking for its summary of the general scope of Tantric practices and literature. In addition, they have provided useful working definitions of Tantrism by considering its literary, historical and theological dimensions.[17]

Yet the work of these three scholars is not without limitations and liabilities, not all of which are fully under their control. The most important of these limiting factors is that oral traditions, recognized as inexorable to a mature understanding of Tantric tradition, are left for future study. The scope of study is limited almost entirely to written historical sources, few of which are properly edited or easily available in print.[18] Goudriaan aptly summarizes the situation when he says:

> ...if one takes the emphasis on oral instruction into account...modern scientifically oriented studies on Tantrism exclusively based on written literature are liable to appear incomplete and full of misunderstandings to an initiated Tantric adept.[19]

And,

> Last but not least, are the oral explanations by living Tantric gurus (or modern accounts based upon these). Although they are in the first place of importance for our knowledge of the development of Tantric doctrine and practice in the recent period, they may also incidently provide the investigator with important clues for the interpretations of the early written sources.[20]

A deliberate focus on Sanskrit literary sources has excluded oral traditions from serious consideration. Sanjukta Gupta, co-author of <u>Hindu Tantrism</u>, has had contact with Tantrics in Vārāṇasi but she too restricts the role of oral explanation in order to emphasize literary materials. This appears to be a calculated effort to de-localize Tantric traditions in order to develop a pan-Indian and generic understanding of Tantric ritual.[21] Gupta's accurate and critical assessment of literary traditions has produced a solid theoretical basis for the study of the oral Tantric tradition. The significance of regional forms in the development of Tantric practice and interpretation, however, appears to go unnoticed.

Gupta's descriptions suggest only general patterns of

Tantric belief and practice. The situation is comparable to saying that Christian traditions prescribe a ritual called the Eucharist based upon Gospel descriptions but then offering no further historical consideration of the practice and its interpretations. The Eucharist described in the Gospels may, for example, be conceived as providing an outline for a ritual later systematized and interpreted variously and may provide an archetype for its later reenactments. The Gospels themselves, however, say nothing about the ways in which Christians practice or interpret the Eucharist theologically through history. Such is the case with many Tantric rituals and theological concepts outlined in primary Tantric sources and commentaries. It is only in the living and oral traditions and through critical historical study that a more complete picture of practice and interpretation emerges.

Another neglected aspect in recent scholarship is the consideration of regionalism in historical and theological developments. In order to develop a comprehensive definition and general outline of the whole of Hindu Tantric tradition, scholars have attenuated local and regional factors in their consideration of the composition and interpretation of texts and ritual practices. General theoretical prescriptions for ritual practice are often mistakenly understood to be actual forms of liturgy for

particular Tantric sects and lineages. Members of the same tradition (sampradāya) and even those belonging to the same lines of teachers (parampara) may, in fact, follow radically different practices and norms of conduct depending upon regional custom (deśācāra) and individual instruction. This does not mean that textual studies limited by subject, theme or particular sect do not yield valuable insights into the broader spectrum of Tantric beliefs, but that the resulting picture is undoubtedly out of focus unless viewed in specific historical and regional settings and in light of oral traditions.

By bringing only selective materials to bear, scholars come to unwarranted conclusions concerning the whole Tantric tradition. Not only must the scholar draw upon a wide selection of sectarian sources in a regional setting to draw definitive conclusions but he must weigh these sources proportionately. Certain texts have left marks on the pan-Indian Tantric tradition while others are strictly limited to sectarian or regional sectarian formulations.

In addition, so much attention has been paid to the antinomian elements of Tantric practice and theology that its deliberate efforts to adapt concepts within the mainstreams of Indian thought are often overlooked or distorted. Rather than a consideration of how Tantrics locate themselves in the center of Indian religious history,

the scholarly emphasis falls on Tantrics as peripheral. More careful scrutiny of the historical situation reveals the majority of sects were not merely rejecting conventional norms of conduct but seeking to balance themselves in relationship to established traditions. Śrīvidyā in south India is one of the most overt examples of a Tantric sect incorporating itself into Hindu orthodoxy and yet retaining a professed unconventionality.

Tantric literary sources, designed as practical guides to ritual according to specific lineage traditions, have rarely (if ever) been followed to the letter: the fluidity of Tantric practice demands that the guru design the spiritual discipline (sādhana) according to the particular needs of the student. Gurus are naturally guided by their own experiences and oral traditions, by the scriptures interpreted within their sect and by regional factors including local customs and mythology.

Studies such as those of Goudriaan and Gupta group together literary sources without attention to sectarian, regional and oral interpretations. These provide, at best, outlines of practice and ideology rather than prescriptions for spiritual discipline (sādhana) or ritual practice. Living Tantrics may accept or reject sources included in a generic description of their sect depending upon their own theological and regional agendas. To say that a particular

lineage of Tantrics "follows" a particular source or group of sources does not mean that the liturgies or specific doctrines contained in them are followed to the letter, or even that they are necessarily a part of the "practical" tradition. From region to region and from group to group the same sources can be so variously interpreted as to suggest only a shadow of the stated prescriptions.[22] Within a single sect, such as Śrīvidyā, particular sources are accepted by some lineages and rejected by others while particular sources have gained regional importance. When Gupta describes Tantric ritual, for example, she draws upon nearly every relevant textual source thematically related to Śāktism. She does not consider, however, the possibility that this type of literary analysis generates an "ideal" that has never had any direct historical parallel.[23]

A regional approach concentrating on specific lineages within a particular sect is one possible solution for overcoming the misunderstanding that arises from assuming a cumulative historical impact of literary works taken across sectarian Tantric traditions. When combined with the study of living oral traditions, such a regional consideration of historical textual sources broadens our understanding of the whole tradition by eliminating speculative generalizations emerging on purely literary grounds.

Limiting the discussion to a Śākta Tantric sect further

narrows the subject by focusing on certain common theological presuppositions and eliminates the need to make complex Hindu sectarian distinctions. This is not to suggest that it is vain to speak of the Tantric tradition in its catholicity. One must, however, go beyond broad literary study and focus instead on identifiable sects and specific sources, including living practices and oral interpretations. A specific case study contributes to an understanding of the larger picture by effectively controlling, if not entirely eliminating, the distorting effects of idealizing Tantrism as a conceptually abstract entity viewed apart from its historical forms. It also focuses instead on Tantric practitioners and interpreters rather than on the tenuous concept of "Tantrism". The focus of discussion is thus centered on the faith of individuals and groups rather than on an abstract concept lacking historical contexts.

C. Regional Scope of the Project

The setting for this study is contemporary south India and, particularly, Tamil Nāḍu. Though much is made of the southern regional factors that shape Śrīvidyā's practice, the core of ideas and values are indeed shared across geographical lines. Regional views, however, are distinguished throughout from generic concepts and

practices. Certainly Śrīvidyā's importance among the Śākta Tantric schools is measured to a large extent by its historical and textual continuity and influence across India's regional boundaries. At the same time regional influences have shaped it in ways that should not be overlooked or underestimated.

The initial task is to identify Śrīvidyā's historical figures and literary sources with pan-Indian significance and to consider their interpretations in the regional setting of south India. This will set the stage for the study of contemporary oral and living Śrīvidyā tradition.

There is presently no systematic scholarly work available considering a major Hindu Tantric sect with pan-Indian popularity that evaluates its theology, history, and the oral components of contemporary interpretation. The task is complicated further by the inaccessibility of outsiders to secret traditions. Historically, Tantrics have gone to great lengths to preserve the secrecy of their traditions but as one adept observed:

> The time has come to make information about our traditions more available. This does not mean opening the doors to anyone who wishes to practice. That is different. It is time to dispel the misconceptions about our practices.
>
> Our books are now publicly available, we must respond or else be further misunderstood. Our secrets will not be violated by telling the truth about ourselves.[24]

These changing attitudes indicate that the time is ripe

for scholars to begin reevaluating Tantric materials and to begin searching for new sources of information.

D. The Definition of Tantrism and its Historical Significance in the History of Indian Religions

Before proceeding with an analysis of Śrīvidyā and an outline of the present study's methodology, it is necessary to clarify the general features that define and characterize "Tantric" Indian religious traditions and to establish why the Śrīvidyā sect offers fertile ground for this type of study. Defining Tantrism's characteristics could obviously consume an entire thesis; it is a matter that has not yet been satisfactorily resolved despite having received considerable scholarly attention. I shall review here only those points relevant to the present investigation. A general familiarity with Tantrism's basic structure of beliefs and practices has been assumed; these are matters considered so fundamental that they unquestionably cut across all sectarian distinctions.[25] The present study restricts itself to Hindu Tantrism not because, as one scholar has put it, the similarities between Hindu and Buddhist forms are "wholly accidental", but because their interrelations are complex and the subject tangential to this investigation.[26]

Generalizations about Tantrism in the present study refer primarily (but not exclusively) to Śāktas, the Goddess-centered Hindu traditions, unless otherwise noted. Śrīvidyā is a distinctive form of Śāktism and a school of Tantrism; the basic difference between Tantrism and Śāktism is this study's most fundamental point of departure. Teun Goudriaan has aptly set it forth:

> Applying the wider sense, one can say that Tantrism or Tantric elements are found---in differing grades of frequency and intensity---in Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, Jainism and Buddhism; but no one will probably deny the prevalent position of Śāktism within the Hindu Tantric fold...
>
> The essential role of Śāktism in the Tantric tradition is emphasized by various authors. Tantrism and the Śakti cult are even identified outright. But it seems best to consider, with Payne (Śāktas, p.72) Śāktism and Tantrism as "two intersecting but not coinciding circles". On account of its "inclusive" nature, Tantrism is much more diffused. Śāktism is defined in different ways...Sometimes it is incorrectly identified with "the cult of female deities in general"...It can be shortly characterized as the worship of Śakti...i.e., the universal and all-embracing dynamis which manifests itself in human experience as a female divinity. To this should be added that inseparably connected with her is an inactive male partner as whose power of action and movement the Śakti functions...It is therefore not enough to say that a Śākta worships the female as ultimate principle; nor is it correct categorically to state that Śāktism is characterized by the use of the five makāras... Like "Tantrism", "Śāktism" is sometimes also used in a wider meaning. It makes sense to distinguish an "independent" from a "dependent" variety... In the latter case, the Śakti(s) is (are) worshipped within the fold of another denomination (like Vaiṣṇavism or Jainism) without constituting the essence of its creed and practice, while in the Śākta sect proper the Śakti is the chief divinity.

> Although Śāktism is often defined also by means of typical ritual practices, it is advisable to restrict the use of this term for a world view oriented towards Śakti, while Tantrism should be applied to a conglomerate of ritual and yogic practices and presuppositions.[27]

In the theological sense, Tantrism entails sādhana or spiritual discipline defined as a systematic quest for worldly prosperity, empowerment and final liberation by esoteric means. These esoteric means include the recitation of mantras, the use of gestures (mudrās), the identification of sounds and deities with the body (nyāsa) and the application of these and other elements (such as yoga and philosophical enquiry) in practical forms of contemplative worship (pūjā or upāsana).[28] The most important feature of Tantric discipline is the deliberate effort to enact and embody theological symbols and concepts, the most central of which is the unity of bipolar opposites expressed in sexual terms. Tantrism is fundamentally "esoteric" in the sense that the secrecy of teachings and the necessity of private initiation are emphasized as defining features of its traditional transmission. Tantric theories and practices require special instruction into forms of mental, verbal and bodily discipline which, in turn, depend upon secrecy and proper initiation for their maintenance.

Obviously, the most accurate historical definition of an individual or group as Tantric is self designation.

Those directly inheriting the legacy of Tantric faith and belief provide historical and living paradigms of its theoretical and practical definition.[29] Śrīvidyā's historical proponents clearly acknowledge their tradition to be Tantric and the reticence expressed by a handful of contemporary adepts to accept this designation arises from the term's colloquial association with moral lassitude or "black" magic.

The scholar laboring to identify the unique characteristics of Tantric faith will find precious few not in evidence elsewhere in Vedism, classical Hinduism or in other non-Tantric Indian religious traditions.[30] Historically as well as theologically, Tantrism is best understood not for its unique contributions to Indian religion but as a synthesis of established concepts and beliefs cast into particular forms.

In addition to self-designation a particular tradition is Tantric by being a locus of those characteristics that collectively describe its generic features. Thus, it is perhaps more appropriate to use "Tantric" as an adjective describing individuals or groups displaying a synthesis of generic characteristics rather than as a noun suggesting a single or fixed set of organizational principles. Śrīvidyā is exemplary of the synthetic structure of concepts and practices; it shares the basic elements of Tantrism and

Śākta theology and yet creates an individual identity by drawing together distinctive symbolic components following commonly shared patterns. Its ritual use of mantras and yantras, for example, is common to all Śākta Tantrics while the particular forms these elements take give it its unique definition within the sectarian tradition.

Goudriaan has developed a list of descriptive and theoretical criteria that serve as a general description of Hindu Tantrism. But these do not apply in every case, as the present study demonstrates conclusively, and can only serve to outline Tantrism's major components in the generic sense.[31]

The principal features of Tantrism not evident from the theological definition already given and shared across sectarian lines can be summarized in the following points:

1. Tantric texts are extra-Vedic as authoritative religious sources. They often claim to supercede Vedic and conventional sources as the most appropriate means to salvation in the degenerate Kālī yūga by proffering alternative forms of Vedic practice and ritual. More frequently they are considered additional aids for leading a disciplined religious life rather than as sublating Vedic prescriptions.

2. Tantrism teaches special forms of yoga and spiritual discipline including the quasi-physiological kuṇḍalinī yoga.[32] This involves an identification of certain centers of activity with sounds and deities invoked from within the body.

3. Tantric deities are principally identified as being within the body and as aspects of the individual's personality. Unlike other Hindu concepts of the invocation of divinity, Tantric identifications bring macrocosmic beings into the bodily and mentally constructed microcosm.

4. Tantrism involves elaborate speculations on the nature of sound, especially in texts specifying mantras and forms of practice designated spiritual discipline (sādhana). Creation in its material manifestations is paralleled in sounds that are meta-linguistic formations reflecting the original state of ontological unity. The Brahman of Upaniṣadic speculations in its most subtle, pre-articulated form is itself viewed as a derivative of sound. To hold the key to these sound formulations is to be empowered with the ability to manipulate nature, affect social and spiritual events and ultimately, guide the course of individual salvation (both one's own and others).

5. Tantrics, like other Hindus, place an extraordinary value on the authority of the teacher (guru). In Tantrism the guru's authority may supercede any scriptural or traditional source. The links to the guru are solidified by the necessity of initiation (dīkṣā). The guru's direct guidance defines the path and practices of the particular lineage (parampara).

6. Tantric spirituality places a strong emphasis on ritual and meditative practices involving bi-polar symbology often put in contrasting sexual terms of male and female, or theologically speaking, in the figures of the gods Siva and Sakti. In this process the female manifestations take on a special significance not seen in Vedism.

7. Ritual practices in Tantric traditions are viewed as internal and external forms of sacrifice (i.e., antar- and bahiryāgas). This involves microcosm/macrocosm symbolism and other esoteric activities designed as transformative means for spiritual advancement. The internalization of deities, ritual acts and speculative symbols is one of the features of Tantric traditions in evidence in certain mystical sources of Hindu theology such as the early Upaniṣads.

8. Secrecy is a religious value linked to initiation (dīkṣā) and the conservation of power within the tradition religiously and socially. It is also conceptually linked to claims of an expeditious accomplishment of worldly and spiritual aims. Tantra is secret and dangerous because it is a "lightening bolt path", as Buddhists called it, not easily controlled or mastered. It offers a "short cut" to this goal from the long and arduous path to liberation. This is a subject given more careful scrutiny in the study of living traditions in Part Two.

9. Tantrics use substances in ritual and engage in practices disapproved of in the conventional sources of Hindu Dharma. These include the five m's or makāras, so-called because each of the Sanskrit terms begins with °m': wine (madya), fish (matsya), meat (māṃsa), fermented grain (mudrā) and sexual union (maithuna). The value and appropriateness of the makāras is debated among Tantrics and is the focus of much discussion within Śrīvidyā. The place of these and other socially antinomian forms of conduct in the spiritual path are given careful attention in the study of the living Śrīvidyā traditions of south India. While characteristically Tantric these activities are by no means universally accepted or approved. They do, however, in a sense encapsulate the Tantric quality of collapsing conventional and ultimate perspectives and goals: by using ordinary things and engaging in behavior defying the codes of high-caste Hindus, Tantrics attempt to break through the structures of convention and discover ultimate reality as immanent in the physical and everyday world. The emphasis is not only on identifying ontologically with the macrocosmic reality of Brahman as entirely immanent in the physical and spiritual body but in realizing Brahman's blissful nature (ānanda) as having both physical and spiritual effects.

10. Tantric initiation is based on schemes of qualification (adhikāra) in which caste and sex are not the primary criteria for acceptability. This is not to say that these components are disregarded. Rather Tantric qualification depends more upon physical and mental dispositions such as personal self-discipline and a clear resolve to undertake the rigors of the spiritual disciplines of daily practice. The flavor of Tantric sources is not anti-caste but emphasize a non-caste based hierarchy of spiritual qualification.[33]

These are not, of course, the only characteristics of Tantric traditions.[34] They do, however, cut across sectarian lines and outline the general criteria applied in the present case study.

It is with these defining criteria in mind that scholars assert Śākta Tantrism to be Hindu Tantrism *par excellence*.[35] Śakti, though not without her consort (in

Śrīvidyā, an essentially benign Śiva to complement the benign Śakti) is the focus of spiritual practice and centerpiece of speculation. Though it is clear that all Śāktas are not Tantrics the majority of sources bearing the title "Tantra" take the sectarian position of Śāktism. The Tantras focus on the Goddess as the Supreme Principle of the Universe in its active, creative and theologically responsive manifestation. Śāktism, however, is so closely related to Śaiva traditions that it is not unusual to find Śāktas referring to themselves Śaivas; in certain theological and practical ways the differences between Śaivas and Śāktas are more frequently matters of emphasis rather than of kind. One contemporary Śrīvidyā adept offered this explanation:

> Smārta Brahmins in south India, like ourselves, for example, are basically Śaivas though some of us worship Śakti as our family (kula-) or chosen (iṣṭadevata) deity. In this sense our branch of Śaivism is Śāktism; we see Devī as inseparable from Śiva and Śiva as the root of the tree. In Śrīvidyā Śakti encompasses the Śiva principle. This is clearly different from, say, the Śaiva Siddhāntins for whom Śiva is the focus of worship.[36]

Śāktas, however, are not the preeminent Tantrics because they were necessarily the first to develop or systematize Tantric beliefs and practices.[37] The origins of Tantrism in India are as recondite as those of Goddess worship and it is simply impossible to determine

conclusively which Tantric group or regional manifestation is responsible for developing specific elements.[38] Śrīvidyā, while clearly a Śakti-centered sect, is deeply influenced by Kashmiri Śaivism especially with regard to the theoretical aspects of cosmology. Without ever acknowledging openly any commonality, Śrīvidyā assumes the essential structure of Kashmiri Śaiva cosmology but instead considers Śakti as the central figure. There is simply not enough evidence presently available to evaluate who is "borrowing" from whom. A more plausible and likely situation is that Śāktas and Śaivas shared ideas and applied them to suit their own distinctive theological focus.

Śākta Tantrics are exemplary of Tantrism in general by their commitment to its synthetic structure, elaboration and systematization of patterns of belief and practice. While all Tantric sects, for example, employ bipolar and sexual symbolism to embody ritually the Upaniṣadic notions of Ātman and Brahman, only Śāktas take the metaphysical position to the conclusion of absolute non-dualism.[39] Śaiva Āgamas and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra traditions remain committed to varying degrees of theological dualism in which the individual's relationship to the divine is subordinate even at the final level of spiritual realization. Hence divine grace and intervention play a more prominent role in defining the liberative process for non-Śākta oriented Tantrics. Āgamic

oriented Śaivas and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrins place less stress than Śāktas on private, individual meditation and ritual enactment. It can also be argued that only Śāktas systematize their esoteric theology by making ritual enactment the key to liberation. Others, in comparison, reflect this process only partially.[40]

If Saktas are the Tantrics par excellence then Śrīvidyā may be considered an exemplary sect of Śākta Tantrism. Perhaps no other sectarian group has gone to comparable lengths to organize and elaborate its theology, symbolism and ritual practices. This is evident not only in literary sources but in the continuity of practices and interpretations maintained by contemporary adepts.[41]

Śāktas primarily worshipping the goddess in beneficent (saumya) forms other than Śrīvidyā's Lalitā Tripurasundarī have less elaborate forms of Tantric spiritual discipline (sādhana) especially with regard to rituals integrating an anthropomorphic image, mantra and yantra.[42] Only the worship of the terrifying Kālī aspect as set forth in the Kālīkula Tantras (and in its Bengali forms especially) reaches comparable levels of systematization. Even in this case, however, the effort to link theoretical and speculative symbolism with ritual practice appears to have been less clearly developed than in Śrīvidyā sources.[43] Śrīvidyā stands out not only as a coherent body of

theological literature but as a Śākta Tantric tradition codifying and distinguishing its own practices from others and, at the same time, drawing upon common themes.

It will not be an object of this study to prove Śrīvidyā's claims of intellectual preeminence among Śāktas nor to demonstrate that it is "more Tantric" than other sects. The aim, rather, is to examine the key elements of this living Tantric faith and compare them to general literary and historical descriptions of Tantrism. Purely literary study or theological analysis would, in fact, tell us very little about the actual religious lives of Śrīvidyā adepts.

A regional focus on Śrīvidyā's living traditions also provides an opportunity to dispel certain superficial generalizations about Tantrism which have unfortunately evolved into cherished dogmas.[44] One example is the often repeated notion that caste and gender are not significant factors in determining spiritual qualification (adhikāra). These are, in fact, essential features of any Tantric evaluation for discipleship. With the living oral tradition and actual cases in mind it is possible to observe how Śrīvidyā interprets these issues in text, history and practice.

The south Indian setting also affords the opportunity to examine Śrīvidyā tradition as a private Tantric tradition

in more public settings. Śrīvidyā has acquired a unique place in southern Śaiva temples and in the traditions of the maṭhas of the Śāṅkara tradition in Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgerī; it is one of the few Tantric sects whose distinctive features are directly observable outside the domains of private, initiated Tantric practice. In the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñcipuram, for example, the śrīcakra, an object of worship specific to Śrīvidyā, is worshipped in public contexts regardless of the initiated status of the devotee. In another case, a major literary work of Śrīvidyā, the Saundaryalaharī attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, has gained enormous popularity among southern Śrīvidyā adepts who instruct non-initiates into its specific ritual uses (prayogas).[45] The full extent of the diffusion of this private, Tantric worship in public forums is a major subject of investigation in Part Two.

Śrīvidyā is not only important as an historical sect of Śākta Tantrism but in recent times has left a significant mark on the larger fabric of Hindu Indian life. Its basic triad of theological and ritual forms has become part of the mainstreams of Hindu faith; its adepts have brought ordinarily restricted, initiated beliefs and practices into popular religious settings. The social and religious conditions under which these elements have accommodated regional contexts and incorporated popular elements of faith

is of primary concern to our study of living tradition.

E. The Scope, Objectives and Methods for the Present Study

The Śrīvidyā tradition will be examined from three interrelated perspectives dividing the study into three parts.

In Part One the initial task is to trace the Śrīvidyā's origins as an historical movement by observing the earliest literary references to its defining features and examining it as part of the larger Kaula Śākta Tantra tradition. A chronological review of the key Śrīvidyā texts and figures that have had an impact on south Indian traditions offers the necessary historical and literary perspective.

Śrīvidyā, as an historical sect, is then also considered in relation to other Śākta Tantric theologies and forms of worship as well as in relation to other non-Tantric movements. Since, for example, Śrīvidyā not only maintains the standard positions of Śākta non-dualism (advaita) but includes the advaita theologian Śaṅkarācārya within its tradition, this matter is given special attention. Secrecy, initiation and the role of the guru, important to Tantrism in general, are examined in the course of the discussion and help distinguish Śrīvidyā's interpretations from other Kaula and Śākta Tantric schools.

Broader thematic issues in the Indian tradition such as the roles of action, knowledge and devotion in the quest for liberation form a central part of the historical analysis. Concepts of caste, attitudes towards women and the inclusion of such controversial ritual components as the so-called five makāras (see the defining characteristics given above) are discussed in both Parts One and Two.

Last but not least in importance are issues concerning the study of religion. These include the roles of scripture and authority, of ritual symbolism and liberation through specific types of action, especially ritual action. Śrīvidyā provides a specific context in which to discuss general principles and methods of interpretation in the history of religions. Also of concern in the present study is the use of feminine imagery of the divine and its role in specific regional and historical contexts.

The basic triad of theological and ritual speculation that collectively defines Śrīvidyā is a topic of detailed discussion in Part One. The investigation begins with the goddess in her familiar beneficent (saumya) anthropomorphic form as she is described in the tradition's major literary sources. References are drawn from a variety of sources but center on the accounts given by Śrīvidyā authors; these include the Śrīkula Tantras, devotional works such as the Lalitāsahasranāma and the sectarian Śākta Upaniṣads

(especially the Tripurā Upaniṣad). The Goddess's nature and attributes as the motherly Śrī, Lakṣmī or Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the names particularly favored in Śrīvidyā sources, are considered for their theological, esoteric and practical ritual significance.

Śrīvidya's preference for the beneficent Lalitā has brought a theological identification of this particular aspect with all similarly beneficent localized forms of the goddess. This process of identification is given specific contexts in the living traditions and within the broader setting of the south Indian Śaiva temple cults.

The goddess Lalitā Tripurasundarī, however, is not worshipped exclusively by Śrīvidyā adepts though it is the particular name and aspect of Śakti at the center of the tradition. Neither is Lalitā the sole deity within Śrīvidyā. Other Hindu gods, goddesses, demigods and saints are revered for their role in the traditional theological complex. These images are also discussed in relation to the figure of Lalitā. Śrīvidyā today, in south India especially, is passed predominantly among smārta Brahmins who also follow their own family traditions and may be involved in other forms of Śaiva sectarian worship. What makes Lalitā Tripurasundarī special in Śrīvidyā is her further identification with mantra and yantra forms, forms that Śrīvidyā alone is responsible for developing.

The second corner of Śrīvidyā's theological triangle is the mantra or sound manifestation identified with Lalitā Tripurasundarī. As in other Tantric schools, mantras play a seminal role in Śrīvidyā's ritual practices and speculations. While Śrīvidyā employs elements of <u>mantraśāstra</u> common to all Tantrics its own highly developed forms are among its most important practical and intellectually compelling features. Lalitā's fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra is itself called the <u>śrīvidyā</u> and is the source of the tradition's name. It is perhaps Śrīvidyā's most esoteric and least public component but also central and unique to the tradition. Its various configurations remain a guarded secret; historical sources prefer codes or shadowy descriptions to explicit mention. The symbolism and ritual use of the <u>śrīvidyā</u> is discussed in detail in Part One as well as its place in the broader Tantric and <u>mantraśāstra</u> traditions. Its variant forms according to different sub-sects and the different roles it plays in the soteriological process are considered in light of historical and speculative materials.

The third component of Śrīvidyā's theological triad is the <u>śrīcakra</u>, the goddess in her diagrammatical manifestation as a complex configuration of triangles, lines and shapes. The <u>śrīcakra</u>'s popularity among contemporary Hindus extends well beyond the parameters of the Śrīvidyā.[46]

Its symbolism and theological significance, along with the śrīvidyā, is the focal point of Śrīvidyā ritual, cosmology and speculation. As a macrocosmic symbol of the universe, the śrīcakra finds its microcosm in human body while its component elements are considered for their specific ritual roles in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline and soteriology.

These three essential theological elements form the basis for Śrīvidyā's distinctive patterns of belief and practice. They define it as a school of Śākta Tantrism and as a collection of sub-schools, each with its own interpretations and procedures.

In Part Two historical and theological Śrīvidyā is considered as a living faith in contemporary south India. Oral traditions and individual adept's interpretations are presented as reflections upon historical sources and the changing conditions of the modern situation. The impact of historical and social change and the spread of Śrīvidyā from the nucleus of initiated followers to the larger social setting is also examined. The center of textual investigation shifts from the pan-Indian "classical" Tantras and other comparable sources to the ritual handbooks (paddhatis or nibandhas) of individual lineages that form the core of living tradition practice.

The investigations in Part Two also involve the

living tradition's interpretation of the basic theological triad: the anthropomorphic Lalitā Tripurasundarī is identified with a number of local manifestations of the goddess and as part of certain Śaiva temple traditions; the śrīvidyā mantra is examined as it is practiced among initiates and the śrīcakra considered for its major role in ritual in both private and public settings.

Theological and practical issues raised in Part One as purely textual and historical matters are given a specific living and regional setting in Part Two. For example, the historical relationship of Śaṅkara, the works attributed to him (as claimed by Śāktas) and the teachings embodied in these works are considered in relation to Śaṅkara influenced Śrīvidyā adepts and the Śāṅkara tradition established in Kāñcipuram. Contemporary Śrīvidyā, by and large, accepts as fact the dubious historical relationship of the eighth century Śaṅkara to the tradition.

In the period of my basic research in 1984-85 over thirty distinct lineages of Śrīvidyā adepts were identified and well over one hundred interviews of initiates conducted.[47] The informants reveal their faith as a dynamic and authentic reflection of Śrīvidyā's literary, historical traditions. The cumulative historical impact of texts and traditions on the contemporary lineage's oral traditions is at the center of critical analysis. Adepts' views on caste,

community and religious identity have a practical impact on their interpretations within south Indian cultural context. What people declare as belief or claim to practice is often quite different from how they actually behave; this is investigated as part of the effort to understand Śrīvidyā as a dynamic faith.

Informants represent a wide spectrum of social and religious communities. For the sake of comparison, Śrīvidyā's southern tradition is contrasted briefly with northern manifestations, especially those in Uttar Pradesh and Mahārāṣṭra. The basic research methodology employed was interview, observation and participation. More detailed remarks concerning the methodology of the study and its results are given at the beginning of Part Two.

It is obvious that such a study cannot proceed without a large degree of subjective input. If there is any obvious subjective posturing in the presentation of these fieldwork observations it is that I have assumed a generally positive, but not uncritical, approach to the tradition. I have accepted at face value, as Śrīvidyā's followers do, its commitment to genuine religious ideals. Whether the living tradition succeeds in measuring up to its lofty religious ideals and moral values is a matter for critical appraisal. The results of this approach will, I believe, speak for themselves as will the sincerity of the informants and the

effort to evaluate them justly.

F. A Note on the Circumstances of the Present Study

The specific circumstances under which this study was undertaken deserve a brief description since these factors play a significant part in the methodologies employed to realize it. Scholars trained as professional Indologists and historians of religion have rarely been afforded the opportunity to study Tantric traditions with due consideration to oral sources and living interpretations. This is undoubtedly a major reason why such studies have so rarely been attempted. Tantric practitioners even when trained in the western academic tradition have themselves refrained from coming forth with studies meeting critical standards.[48] Personal involvement in a religious tradition such Hindu Tantrism has often led to a breach of scholarly discretion and disinterested critical analysis.[49]

It would, however, be disingenuous to deny my personal involvement with the subject and the sect. Rather it is due to this direct contact with the tradition that I was able to gain access to the traditions of living adepts. Whether scholarly indiscretion has been committed is left for the reader to decide. However, given the amount of materials collected on contemporary traditions the views of any one lineage might well have been omitted. None of the recorded

responses of Śrīvidyā adepts are my own opinions.

Equally serious is whether I have breached the trust of Tantric tradition and my informants. Information is withheld only to the extent that it implicates individuals in ways that would offend or embarrass them personally. These instances are indeed very rare. No individuals or groups are identified by their actual names. This one condition allowed frank and open discussion. The overwhelming majority of informants responded in the trust that neither personal nor traditional proprieties would be violated and I did not pretend to leave my own faith "at the doorstep". Most adepts were anxious to see more materials for study and practice become available and many were willing to part with traditional secrets if certain misconceptions, viewed as the major cause for the tradition's being morally suspect, might be eliminated. A further discussion of the attitudes of informants and procedures used to gather information is given at the beginning of Part Two.

The majority of materials for the study of living traditions were gathered during 1984 and 1985 while I lived and worked in the home of, Dr. G. Sundarmoorthy, Chairman of the Department of Sanskrit at Madurai-Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nāḍu. Beginning with only two known informants our immediate task was to extend the network by

gaining the trust and confidence of a large number of Śrīvidyā adepts. In the process we were welcomed into countless homes with a hospitality that is a testimony to the generosity of Indian culture. It was in these essentially private settings that these men and women discussed their personal and religious lives. Whenever possible we availed the opportunity to observe adepts in more open and public circumstances. The details of these meetings and the accounts of the rituals witnessed and texts interpreted for us are a primary subject of Part Two. Only selective cases have been included in this discussion.

Textual studies, including the surveying of manuscripts and the editing, translating and review of major sources continued at the same time we gathered our oral commentaries and observed practices. Living adepts' comments on specific texts and interpretations are included here as well. While the majority of the field work was completed in 1984-85, the entire effort is the cumulative outcome of studies begun originally in 1977-78.

Comparisons between southern and northern practices within Śrīvidyā reflect many of the general north/south distinctions in Indian culture and Hindu faith. It is possible, for example, to demonstrate that a more literal and less socially conservative approach to some Tantric rites is characteristic of northern interpretations. It is

also possible to affirm the general impression that south Indian Hindu culture has bound itself more to the temple cult (especially in post-Islamic south India) and that southern Śrīvidyā adepts have deliberately sought to bring the private cult into forms of temple worship. In contemporary north India there are fewer observable connections between private and public displays and noticeably less effort made on the part of adepts to bring private practices into public (or quasi-public) settings.

The concepts of secrecy and the guru as the locus of spiritual authority are given special attention in the analysis of practices and textual interpretations of the living tradition. The adepts' treatment of books, reverence of scriptures and understanding of history and the instruction of their own teachers contributes to this consideration. In the direction of disciples Tantric gurus, for example, have the authority to sublate virtually any written or oral traditions. This gives them an absolute power to determine what is authoritative on an individual basis. This absolute authority, however, is obviously not exercised in an historical, scriptural or traditional vacuum and Śrīvidyā gurus do not fail to respond to these factors. Attitudes towards scripture and other elements of traditional authority are investigated among living adepts.

G. Concluding Portion of the Project

Part Three, which is designated as Appendix I, offers a translation a major Srividya work, the Tripurā Upaniṣad with the commentary (bhāṣya) of one of its foremost historical figures, the eighteenth century south Indian, Bhāskararāya or Bhāsurānandanātha. This work, never before available in a language other than the original Sanskrit, offers the mature reflections of a key historical proponent and covers a variety of subjects including the symbolism of the śrīcakra, the śrīvidyā mantra, the ritual use of the pañcamakāras and the esoteric and erotic form of worship known as kāmakalādhyāna. The text is entirely Tantric despite bearing the title 'upaniṣad': its sixteen cryptic and encoded verses are epigrams that can be interpreted only by the initiated adept.

In the history of Śākta and Tantric literature the Tripurā Upaniṣad is important but not an indispensible work. It certainly gains prominence after Bhāskararāya and largely because of his interest in it. I have chosen to include it as part of the present study for three reasons: first, it offers a short summary of virtually all the major concepts and values that shape Śākta Tantrism and has for its specific emphasis the Śrīvidyā tradition. With Bhāskararāya's comments it is an illuminating summary of materials covered more technically and in more detail

elsewhere. Second, its wide range of subjects allows one to draw upon materials not found in other works of comparable size or importance within Śrīvidyā. Thus interpretations concerning both theoretical and practical matters come up in the text. Unlike the other Śākta Upaniṣads Bhāskararāya commented upon, Tripurā Upaniṣad is not limited to a single subject as is Bhavanā Upaniṣad nor is it as terse and disjointed as Kaula Upaniṣad. It has the added value of never before having been translated. The third reason for the text's particular relevance to the present study is its continued importance in living traditions, especially in south India.

While Tripurā Upaniṣad is not an introduction to Śrīvidyā, neither is it, when taken with Bhāskararāya's comments, too impenetrable to be appreciated by scholars and non-initiates of the sect. Bhāskararāya does much to unravel the technical and shadowy language of the text but is not always straightforward himself. It is evident that he too is writing for a select audience of philosophically inclined adepts. The present translation makes use of the comments and remarks of contemporary adepts as well as the two other available historical commentaries. This enhances the overall textual interpretation and sometimes clarifies Bhāskararāya's gnomic utterances.[50] An introduction to the text reviews its structure and contents and places it in the

contexts of the historical development of Śrīvidyā.

The text and commentary are especially relevant to the present study when taken in light of contemporary south Indian traditions. Bhāskararāya himself has left a mark on Śrīvidyā traceable to the present; at least three contemporary lineages (paramparā) claim his spiritual inheritance. It is possible then to consider how these groups respond to his works and follow his interpretative suggestions. It may also be possible to solve some of the more mysterious aspects of his historical legacy such as the disputes between his disciples and conflicting interpretive claims made in contemporary lineages.

Tripurā Upaniṣad is also relevant to the present work because it plays a prominent role in ritual and contemplative Śrīvidyā in modern times. The text is considered valuable for its mantric qualities quite apart from its semantic meanings. Like few other texts it is recited and appended to such rituals as śrīcakra pūjā, the primary ritual event of Śrīvidyā worship. The significance of the text in its different roles as theoretical source book and ritual component deserves consideration as part of contemporary tradition.

In the notes to the translation the Sanskrit text is emended to correct the readings given in the available Tantrik Texts Series Edition of Śākta Upanisads (see the

Bibliography for details) following a review of five manuscripts gathered from libraries and private collectors in India. While not a critical edition, the corrected text is a first step in bringing this valuable work to the attention of scholars.

1. The history of early scholarship in Tantric studies is discussed by Goudriaan thoroughly in his study of Tantric and Śākta literature (cf.,p.2ff.). Rather than reproduce his work I have chosen instead to limit the discussion of past scholarship and concentrate on theoretical and methodological issues for the present study. Goudriaan's two recent works are without question the most extensive and elaborate general studies on Tantrism available to date. He reviews the history of scholarship as well as the history of Tantric tradition with a careful and critical eye for detail. See Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta, Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981 (Vol.II, fasc.2 of A History of Indian Literature, edited by Jan Gonda) [abbreviated hereafter as HTSL]; and Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens and Teun Goudriaan, Hindu Tantrism. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979 (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 4.Band, 2.Abschnitt) [abbreviated hereafter HT].

2. The same tone of disapproval is found in north India though I cannot speak as authoritatively on the actual linguistic patterns. In the south, however, especially in Tamil Nāḍu the immediate visceral reaction to the term "tantra" is negative among those with no formal connection to its traditions. Many contemporary adepts of Śrīvidyā, for example, refuse to refer to themselves or to their tradition as Tantric because of the suggestion that it is immoral or includes destructive magic. When it is pointed out to them that this doesn't seem to be the case with their historical predecessors they suggest the rather plausible idea that the term has historically undergone a drastic change in suggestive meaning, at least in the public domain.

3. The independence of the Śrīvidyā school has been discussed by Goudriaan and acknowledged by a number of other modern scholars including Bharati and Chakravarty. See HT, p.26 and HTSL, p.58f. and p.165f; also cf., Bharati, Agehananda, The Tantric Tradition. New York: Samuel Weiser, Revised American Paperback Edition, 1975. (First published New York: Rider and Co., 1965.); and Chakravarty, Ch., The Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literature. Calcutta: University Press, 1963. [Hereafter, Chakravarty]

4. The regional division of the worship of the goddess is discussed in several of the Tantras and is taken up in detail below. Cf., HT, p.43. Śrīvidyā within the broader scope of the Tantric tradition is also considered as is its being a form of Śāktism.

5. The research and methodology employed for the study of the living tradition is detailed at the beginning of Part Two. Regarding historical materials, contemporary adepts were rarely well-informed on the availability of works in print or manuscript except those few of interest to their own lineage. Without the oral traditions of interpretation, however, literary study is bound to produce misleading results. See below for Goudriaan's comment on the necessity of oral explanations.

6. See HT, p.4f. While the present study limits itself to a particular sect of Tantrics in a particular region, it is not limited to only a small selection of Tantric literature. Śrīvidyā tradition draws upon a vast corpus of literature, and includes sources that are limited in scope to its principles and practices, as well as those espousing the broader themes of Tantric Śāktism. An historical review of the Tantric literature important to the development of Śrīvidyā in south India is included in Part One.

7. This approach is inspired and is in a large measure dependent upon the ideas of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, especially as he presents them in his two works, Faith and Belief and Towards a World Theology. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979; Towards a World Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981. See the Conclusion for further remarks on this matter.

8. A fact that has not escaped Goudriaan in his literary studies. It is clear that Sanjukta Gupta has had contact with living Tantrics but unfortunately these interpretations do not play a major role in her studies of ritual. (See HT, Part Three, Modes of Worship and Meditation.) I know of no other detailed study of living Tantrics available at present either by an historian of religion or an anthropologist although a study of the practices of the living Nāth Yogis (i.e., the traditions of Gorakhnāth) is now being prepared by David White, doctoral candidate in the History of Religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

9. As one south Indian Śrīvidyā adept noted, "We no longer collect manuscripts but books, although a few of us copy whatever we can gather in either form. The printed works though come often from persons with no knowledge or no personal interest in preserving the tradition. They are filled with misprints and include many things, such as mantras, that should not be printed but kept only in oral tradition. When they publish such things as paddhatis they must say that it is not meant for just anyone to practice

these mantras. That is a great danger. Persons not properly instructed in the mantras and the yoga can do great harm to themselves. Without the books so much of our knowledge would be lost or suffer greatly since there is no longer the great care taken to preserve things in manuscript; but with the printed books we leave ourselves open to those who either misunderstand or have not been educated into the tradition to practice it. I must say, there is both a good and an evil side to the modern situation." [Quotation from "Naṭarāja", 1984]

10. See HTSL, p.2f. Special mention should be made here of Sir John Woodroffe (also known by his pen name, Arthur Avalon) who pioneered the study of Tantrism as the first westerner to record his own personal involvement. Though lacking in critical scholarship, Woodroffe's work remains at times the only available source for published materials. His editions of the Tantrarājatantra and the Śākta Upaniṣads have become standard but are severely lacking from critical and scholarly points of view. Unfortunately no one to date has taken up the task of re-editing these basic texts, a situation that typifies the state of scholarship in Tantric studies.

11. The most noteworthy recent efforts apart from Goudriaan and Gupta are those of two great Indian scholars, V.V. Dwiveda and G. Kaviraj. Their editions of Śrīkula Tantras and introductions to the materials are the most extensive and detailed studies available. Yet neither of these authors offers much discussion of the practice and ritual interpretation of the historical sources. See HTSL, p.220-221 and also the Bibliography for details of these author's works.

12. For a complete listing see HTSL, p.219ff.

13. Scholars in Buddhist studies have recently made significant contributions to the study of Buddhist Tantrism especially, Jeffery Hopkins, Alex Wayman and Robert A. F. Thurman. See the Bibliography for details of their contributions.

Note that Hindu Tantrism must consider three distinct but interrelated sectarian forms, namely, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava. On their respective developments and definitions see HT, p.6ff.

14. For a list of the available editions of Śrīkula Tantras see the Bibliography and also the bibliography provided in HTSL.

15. For a complete list of their contributions see the Bibliography.

16. See HTSL, p.3.

17. See HTSL, p.1ff., and HT, pp.7-9; also Padoux, Andres, Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de la parole dans certains texts tantriques. Paris: Publications de L'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1964, p.44ff. Hereafter cited as "Padoux".

18. It is evident, for example, that Goudriaan's contribution in HTSL depends to a large extent on Dwiveda and Kaviraj and that his remarks on the authorship and content of texts are frequently based on manuscript catalogues and bibliographical sources such as Kaviraj's Tāntrika Sāhitya. This is not to suggest that all of his study is based on these compilations (he, in fact, does not discuss how he proceeded with his work) but it is certain that certain errors are merely repetitions of other's work he deems reliable. For example, his remarks concerning Lakṣmīdhara's alleged exclusion of non-twice-borns from the Samayācāra school cannot be the result of his own reading of the text. Goudriaan's philological abilities are never suspect and thus we can only conclude that he has relied upon others. Another example is his apparent following of Dwiveda on the important question of the identity of the author of the Saubhāgyaratnākāra as the Vidyānanda who authored the Artharatnāvali. See below for the details of these issues.

19. See Goudriaan, HTSL, p.12.

20. HTSL, p.13.

21. Cf., HT, p.122f.

22. An example of this regional preference for certain texts is the unattributed Tripurārahasya which appears almost exclusively in the southern states in manuscript form. While an important work in the historical development of Śrīvidyā in the south, it does not appear to have had a similar impact on the northern traditions. It is, as it were, a local text composed in Sanskrit but without a pan-Indian influence. For more on the text see HTSL, p.166f. Another example is the authoritative Paraśurāmakalpasūtra

which prescribes the use of the five prohibited substances, the so-called pañcamakāras---meat, fish, wine, parched grain and sexual intercourse. In contemporary north India these prescriptions still carry a literal form of interpretation whereas in the south the literal practice has faded in favor of a "substituted" element (pratinidhi) or a complete rejection of the prescription achieved by a "selective" editing of the text.

23. This is particularly relevant to the present study since Gupta centers on the rituals surrounding the worship of the goddess in the form of the śrīcakra, the key element in the Śrīvidyā tradition. Her analysis is complete as an ideal or purely textual composite of the ritual but does not reflect the actual forms followed in the majority of living lineages. For Gupta's analysis see HT, Chapter Five.

24. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, 1984.

25. A review of the major features of Tantrism is given in HT, see especially pp.7-9 and the references given by Goudriaan, in particular to Padoux. The Bibliography also provides a detailed list of references, of particular note are the works of Ch. Chakravarty and P.C. Bagchi.

26. See Guenther, Herbert V., The Tantric Way of Life. Shambala Books: Boulder, Colorado, 1976, p.2.

27. HT, pp.6-7.

28. Cf., HTSL, p.1ff.

29. Thus, the first definition of a Tantric is simply one who calls himself this, but given the feelings associated with the term this does not always suffice. One must look into the practices of individuals and groups and with what historical sources and traditions they identify themselves. Whether or not they call themselves Tantrics may not be as significant as their identification with all or some of Tantrism's characteristic features. It is perhaps more appropriate to use the term 'Tantric' as an adjective rather than as a noun since it does not always apply as a name identifying certain groups or a particular phenomenon but as a set of characteristics that describe a group or individual's ideas and values.

30. By other Indian religious groups I mean to include the Buddhists, Jainas and other "non-Vedic" sects as well as indigenous forms of shamanism in India and elsewhere.

31. HT, p.7f.

32. See HT, Chapter 6 for an extensive discussion of the yogic elements of Tantric sādhana.

33. This view stands in contrast to Bharati's opinion which is not incorrect but overstated. See Bharati, Agehananda, The Tantric Tradition. New York: Samuel Weiser, Revised American Reprint Edition, 1975, p.233; originally published, New York: Rider and Co., 1965.

34. Cf., Padoux, p.44f.; and HT, p.7ff.

35. See HTSL, p.8.

36. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984. See also Part Two.

37. Regarding the early history and development of Tantric literature see HTSL, Chapter Two.

38. On origins of goddess worship see Coburn, Thomas B., Devī Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition. Motilal Banarsidass: New Delhi, 1984, pp.1-86 for an excellent summary.

39. See Goudriaan's remarks in HTSL, pp.32-33 on the theological positions of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tantrics.

40. Cf., Goudriaan who makes a similar statement in HTSL, p.8f. While this point is worth further reflection it seems tangential to the thrust of this argument. Śāktas emphasize all three elements of soteriology (i.e., self-effort, divine grace or intervention and the manipulative magic of mantras and rituals) and yet place a greater stress on the individual's role in affecting the final goal.

41. This statement is based on the experience of my fieldwork. While the vast majority of my effort was directed towards south Indian forms of practice, my correspondence and contacts touched down in virtually every region. This began as an effort to find south Indian adherents in areas other than the south but quickly led to further contact with adepts neither of south Indian origin nor claiming any direct connection with the south Indian regional tradition.

42. An example of this is the goddess Tārā, who in Hindu Tantric works has a mantra and yantra but no systematic forms of pūjā practiced widely. I am not referring to a

relative popularity in regard to the worship of other goddesses but rather an historical pattern in which other beneficent deities have not enjoyed the same degree of attention as Lalitā with regard to these esoteric images and practices. Goudriaan also maintains the same opinion. See HTSL, Chapter One.

43. See HTSL, p.75f. and also van Kooj, K.R., Worship of the Goddess According to the Kālikāpurāṇa. Part I: A Translation with an Introduction and Notes of Chapters 54-59. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.

44. Or the notion, not uncommon in contemporary India, that all Tantrics are given to radical forms of behavior. See HTSL, p.3 and notes for further references.

An emphasis on oral and regional factors gives shape to what are otherwise purely abstract textual formulations. Regional distinctions made in textual sources do not account for the significant variations in the practices and customs (deśācāra) that color traditional lore and determine actual forms of ritual and faith. South Indian Śrīvidyā adepts, for example, differ from their northern counterparts in the ways in which they prepare themselves physically for ritual worship (pūjā).

45. See Part Two's profiles of Śrīvidyā adepts and their relations with non-initiates.

46. HTSL, p.59.

47. A lineage is defined, traditionally, as three generations or more of continuous transmission. Most Śrīvidyā lineages trace themselves back several generations and eventually to one of the twelve sages through whom the śrīvidyā descends. For the sake of confidentiality the real names of my informants have not been given in this document but will be made available to my dissertation examiners. This was one of the conditions guaranteed during the interview process though not all thought it necessary.

48. G. Kaviraj and V.V. Dwiveda are the notable exceptions, see the Bibliography for details concerning their work.

49. The most obvious example is that of Sir John Woodroffe who was a sincere Tantric votary though far too apologetic and lacking in formal academic training to offer a critical perspective. See the Bibliography for a list of his works. For further comments on Woodroffe see HTSL, p.3.

50. The two other historical commentaries on the text belong to Upaniṣadbrahmayogi, best known for his prodigious efforts to expound 108 Upaniṣads, and to a virtually unknown south Indian by the name of Rāmānanda. Upaniṣadbrahmayogi's works are available in editions published by the Adyar Library in Madras, including a translation of his remarks on the Śākta Upaniṣads (and including Tripurā Upaniṣad); see the Bibliography for details. Rāmānanda's work is not fully accounted for, though there are at least two recensions of a commentary bearing this name on Tripurā Upaniṣad. One is available in print though it has been edited poorly while the other remains in manuscript in the Adyar Library in Madras. The versions are so radically different that one might be led to believe that there are perhaps two Rāmānandas. This is unlikely considering literary evidence but awaits future study. Only a cursory use of these two commentaries is made in the translation since Bhāskararāya's work is self-contained and does not appear to refer to either or to the views expressed in them.

Part One
Chapter One
Kula Tantrism and Śrīvidyā Tradition

A. General Remarks on the Diffusion of Tantric Traditions

Śākta Tantric traditions created increasingly narrower self definitions as sectarian distinctions formalized. As Tantrics became more systematic and relied more on written sources to articulate their views, they simultaneously began to recognize and codify internal differences. With the diffusion of written materials came an increasing need for self identity within Tantric sub-traditions.[1]

Schools within particular traditions developed along both theoretical and practical lines and it is not always possible to determine from written sources alone if theories or rituals have historical parallels.[2] Theoretical distinctions and divisions in doctrine, however, are not unknown while ritual prescriptions are frequently codified in ways that could not be intended for literal practice.[3] At one level we must rely on what Tantrics say about themselves but to do so without the input of oral traditions critically analyzed would be to accept literary sources in ways Tantrics themselves do not.

One general feature that accompanies the effort to distinguish Tantric theologies and practices is the tendency for inclusion, that is, to affirm one's own position while not necessarily rejecting others. This general propensity,

however, meets with many exceptions. Śāktas exhibit the inclusive tendency by frequently including themselves as members of other sects, particularly Śaivas and to a lesser extent Vaiṣṇavas. Yet simultaneously they maintain their own distinctive beliefs. While this may appear inconsistent it is not incongruous with historical traditions. Śākta Tantrics appropriate concepts and values articulated in other systems without concerning themselves with what others may say about the consequences of embracing these views. This is especially the case within Śrīvidyā where powerful Brahmanical elements brought it closer to accepted forms of conventional ritual practice and the advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya. In some instances identifying or accepting the views of a particular non-Tantric group has led to a blatant contradiction in theory or practice.[4]

As Tantrism evolved more distinctive sectarian characteristics, their inclusive attitude towards other forms of Hindu faith naturally adapted common ideas to the special features of the Tantric sādhana. In some cases the appropriation of non-Tantric ideas is less apparent; it is not always possible to determine the origins of a particular view or concept and who first espoused it. Cosmologic and cosmogonic theories familiar in Sāṅkhya philosophy (such as the prakṛti/puruṣa split) and Kashmiri Śaivism (especially regarding the devolution of sound from śabdabrahman) have

played important roles in the developed forms of Tantric theology and, in most instances, it seems clear that Tantrism represents a later adaptation. But in other instances there is simply a conflict of claims, or no means of determining the origins of a view. In general it is clear that Tantrics have been less interested in the origins of particular theories than in using them to serve their own interests.

The mere absence of an early written reference does not necessarily preclude the possibility that a particular concept in the later Tantric system does not harken back to an older oral source. This is a common argument contemporary Tantric adepts make regarding the originality and preeminence of their own sect's positions and interpretations. Śrīvidyā, for example, accepts a common Śākta position on the creation of the universe through sound (śabdabrahman) which was likely to have been adopted from Kashmiri Śaivites who, in turn, may have systematized much older concepts.[5] Śrīvidyā's claims to the "authentic" cosmological interpretation are not based upon an argument for their original development but rather upon a concept of coherent presentation. By bringing systematic speculations into ritual practice surrounding the śrīcakra, Śrīvidyā claims to have revealed the "original" projection of creation.[6]

At the same time, Tantrics sometimes claim ideas found in other systems to be originally their own, maintained in oral forms from time immemorial.[7] In other instances they hold their views to be the keys to recovering the "original" esoteric wisdom locked inside the classical Vedic sources.[8] However much a particular group emphasizes its integration into the larger Hindu tradition and shares others' views, it usually does so to assert its own preeminence. Claiming to have been the originator of a position is not as important as having the "original" interpretation on a particular issue: to have access to the "original meaning" is, in the Indian religious view, to be in touch with "authentic" reality. Since Tantrics accept that ignorance (avidyā) of the nature of reality is the cause of rebirth, knowledge (vidyā) of the "original" cosmological situation is indispensible to liberation.

It is little wonder that Hindu Tantrics, immersed in a world-view in which the majority are committed to some notion of Vedic revelation, identify the Tantras as the secret and hence "original" meaning within the Vedas.[9] To the faithful Hindu nothing is more "authentic" than the Vedas because nothing is more "original", there is no more fundamental a revelation of Truth.

If Tantrism is an aberration of pristine Hinduism then it may well be argued that virtually all Hinduism after the

emergence of the Tantras is to some degree aberrant by its assimilation of Tantric concepts. Likewise, the majority of Tantrics envision themselves as part of the ebb and flow of the mainstreams of Hindu "Vedic" faith. The adoption, assimilation and creation of metaphysics, symbols or rituals across traditional lines has rarely been clear cut and is clearly of little importance to the Tantric votary.

B. Śrīvidyā: Goddess Worship Identified with the Srikula Tantras

The Śrīvidyā school locates itself in the midst of the much larger tradition of Tantric goddess worship. Its appearance and influence beyond the confines of Tantric Śāktism is evident from the period of its initial emergence and diffusion, perhaps as early as the fourth or fifth centuries, and certainly predates its first systematic literary presentations in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Śrīvidyā's historical sources are identified with the general corpus of literature still called today in contemporary Kashmiri and south Indian tradition the Śrīkula Tantras.[10]

The characteristic feature of Śrīkula sources is the focus on the goddess in her beneficent (saumya or aghora), benign and motherly form. The Supreme Devī, called principally by the names Lalitā, Śrī or Tripurasundarī

contrasts sharply with the terrifying forms (<u>ghora</u>) of Kālī, Durgā or Caṇḍī the focus of the Kālīkula Tantras.[11] Holding the preeminent theological position within the system as the Supreme Principle in its dynamic and creative aspect, Lalitā, the supreme Śakti is always closely connected to her consort Śiva, her necessary compliment, the sentient and eternal reality. Śrīkula sources maintain a primary focus on the goddess but never forsake a connection to Śiva. Though not the centerpiece of theological speculation, Śiva retains his indispensible role as the source of creation and the final "goal" of the liberative process.

The Śrīkula also includes other forms of literature not formally under the rubric of Tantra. These include sectarian Śākta Upaniṣads and various hymns (<u>stotras</u>), praises (<u>stavas</u>) and protective charms (<u>kavacas</u>). These sources are just as Tantric as those bearing the title "Tantra" inasmuch as they reflect Tantric concepts and values and discuss subjects of similar concern. Śrīkula literature, however, also includes much that is tangential or irrelevant to Śrīvidyā as it has been historically practiced. Some Śrīkula works specifically address Śrīvidyā's distinctive theological or ritual characteristics and are devoted to its exposition; others have little or nothing to do with these concepts and focus instead on other

deities, rites or concepts, many with little relevance to Śrīvidyā worship.[12]

Śrīvidyā's practice and characteristic theological forms are also mentioned in Tantric sources not belonging to Śrīkula literature. Mantraśāstras such as the Mantramahodadhi, for example, include the śrīvidyā as a topic, as do other Tantric sources on mantras, yantras and ritual performance.[13] These sources are also cited by Śrīvidyā's historical and contemporary votaries.[14] Some non-Śrīkula texts, or portions of text, are authoritative because of their regional impact: the key factors being the precedence and prevalence of the local performance of practices and/or historical regard for an author in a localized setting.[15]

It is also certain that Śrīvidyā's votaries were frequently involved with other religious activities including the worship of deities other than Lalitā, the śrīvidyā and śrīcakra; that is to say, with the worship of other images, mantras and yantras. They are especially known for expertise in such traditional sciences as astrology and Vedic sacrifice.[16]

Individuals only marginally involved with Śrīvidyā offer insights into its theory and practice though their own statements of commitment demonstrate that their personal involvements lay elsewhere. The great Kashmiri philosopher

Abhinavagupta, for example, was undoubtedly well informed not only about Śrīvidyā's theoretical and practical elements but with the controversies within the school.[17] Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that he was an initiate into the tradition. In contrast, Bhāskararāya, the eighteenth century south Indian theologian, while versed in many religious traditions and ritual arts openly committed himself to Śrīvidyā. Historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts refer to tangential figures, such as Abhinavagupta, and may indeed express deference to their views, but rarely claim them to be part of the tradition. In other words, the tradition acknowledges a difference between "insiders" and "outsiders" but treats each source and figure individually regarding its potential value and authority. In our study of historical sources this distinction between tangential sources and figures and those focused on Śrīvidyā is essential. If we are to circumscribe Śrīvidyā historically and theologically we must consider the way committed adepts within the sect have given varying degrees of authority to "outside" texts and figures.

The immediate task is to define what makes Śrīvidyā the distinctive school within the Śrīkula Tantras. Despite sharing such universal Tantric values as secrecy and exclusive initiation, Śrīvidyā nevertheless gained recognition outside this limited purview. Having first

emerged in communities of high caste Śaivas, these individuals were frequently key figures in intellectual and spiritual movements beyond Śrīvidyā's sectarian parameters. From the outset of written traditions it is clear that Śrīvidyā votaries consider themselves a spiritual elite in a rather unstructured hierarchy of religious possibilities. Other theological positions are often accepted as "provisionally valid" and only occasionally rejected outright. One of the remarkable features in Śrīvidyā texts is the lack of dialogical exchange and confrontation. The usual pattern of position and counterposition common to Indian philosophical discourse is rare. Sources within the tradition tend to focus on disputes within the sect and only infrequently address "outside" issues. In other words, what is included in a particular discussion is considered only insofar as it is relevant to an "inside" topic. There is little or no posturing of opponent's positions followed by arguments demonstrating untenability.

Exchanges between members of the school itself are marked by varying degrees of tolerance, especially regarding highly charged theological, practical and social issues such as the inclusion of the _pañcamakāras_ or the practice of _kāmakalādhyāna_.[18] In one noteworthy case the dispute centers on interpretation of a guru's works by disciples within separate lineages.[19] But little mention is made of

those outside the fold or their ideas unless it is intended to bolster internal discussions. Śrīvidyā tradition is clearly an historical instance of an initiated few arguing and discussing matters among themselves. What is most significant, however, is the extent to which their influence is felt outside these limited circles.

C. Śrīvidyā and Kula Tantrism

The connection between the Śrīvidyā school and the Śrīkula Tantras is plainly evidenced in both historical and contemporary sources. The extent to which Śrīvidyā adepts have identified with Kula tradition, that is, as Kaula Tantrics, leads to an investigation of the term's meaning both with Śrīvidyā's sectarian sources and in other Kaula traditions.

The difficulties with the term Kaula are similar to those surrounding the term Tantra. It covers such a wide range of possibilities that no simple definition does it justice. Abhinavagupta offers a variety of historical and theological explanations of _kula_ and Kaulism. He attributes its founding with the figure of Macchanda, usually dated, if he is indeed historical, as no later than the fifth century.[20] Since nearly all Tantric materials regardless of sectarian affiliation refer to themselves as _kula_ works

until the time of the sixteenth century Lakṣmīdhara, clearly the term is used not to refer to a body of literature *per se* but to a set of principles and values. The followers of the *kula* refer to themselves as *kulācārins*, those who "practice according to the *kula*".

In *Tantrāloka*, chapter 28, Abhinavagupta mentions ten early teachers of the Kula system and it is evident that Kaula, even from the earliest times, meant both Śiva- and Śakti-centered worshippers.[21] What then does it mean to call oneself a Kaula as, for example, do both Abhinavagupta the Śaivite philosopher and Bhāskararāya the Śākta Śrīvidyā adept? A satisfactory answer is elusive if only because of the multivalent meaning of the term and its historical evolution. In general, *kula* and Kaulism refers to the primary streams of Tantrism characterized by certain principles, values and norms of religious practice.[22] As principles Kaula concepts serve more as guide-posts to action than as sectarian prescriptions. They include the elements of ritual most frequently disputed inside and outside Tantric circles: the *pañcamakāras*, the worship of the female organ in *kāmakalādhyāna* and the inclusion of persons from all castes and both sexes as active ritual participants.[23]

The *Kulārṇava Tantra* is one of the earliest Kaula Tantras frequently cited as authoritative in the works of

Śrīvidyā commentators.[24] The text treats Kaulism as identical to Tantrism and is far more concerned with extolling the greatness of Kaula principles than with Śrīvidyā's distinctive theological and ritual patterns.[25] In this sense it is indicative of the majority of sources that Śrīvidyā adepts selectively bring into their tradition. Like other sectarian Indian theologians, Śrīvidyā commentators read texts with an eye towards their own interpretive agenda and see their distinctive theological elements, such as the preeminence of Lalitā or the śrīcakra, in sources that are arguably not directly concerned with these concepts. Perhaps the most classic example of this is the interpretation of a Ṛg Vedic verse as an esoteric reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra.[26]

Śrīvidyā's earliest historical commentators identify themselves as Kaulas as do all Tantrics. The extent, however, to which they distinguish their being Kaulas from a commitment to Śrīvidyā is not clear until Śrīvidyā begins to separate into distinctive sub-schools. Only when individuals identifying with Śrīvidyā reject Kaula Tantric principles is any distinction made in textual sources. Śrīvidyā's Kaula adherents deem sources authoritative without reference to sectarian divisions as long as they support and to some extent broaden the scope of textual traditions.

Abhinavagupta (c.1000 C.E.) lists many of the sources of Kula tradition in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Tantrāloka.[27] None of these, however, play a significant part in Śrīvidyā. Conspicuously absent from Abhinava's list is the foremost of Śrīkula Tantras, the Vāmakeśvara Tantra, despite its being known in Kashmir from the ninth century and its self designation as a Kula source.[28] Śākta-centered traditions appear only as sub-schools of the Śaiva Kula where, if Abhinavagupta is any indication, the focus lay primarily on the worship of various aspects of Śiva. The position of the Kashmiri Krama system familiar to Abhinava and viewed in opposition to Kaulism by Jayaratha does little to sort out the relationship of Śrīvidyā to the Kula.[29] The Krama, despite being Śākta-oriented, receives no separate mention in the works of Śrīvidyā commentators. To its earliest historical commentators, Śrīvidyā is a kula tradition and the Kula/Śaiva and Krama/Śākta distinction obviously did not pose any significant interpretive problem. Kula did not mean strictly Śaiva anymore than Krama meant to include all Śāktas.

In the Tantrāloka (35.373-374) Abhinavagupta maintains that the Trika, the Śiva-centered tradition he codifies, is the essence of the Kaula as fragrance is to a flower. Jayaratha, however, on TA 38.51 says that kula stands for Śakti which is called nityā (literally "eternal" but perhaps

a reference to the sixteen nityās made prominent within Śrīvidyā). This suggests a closer link to Śākta-oriented traditions and would offer a justification for Jayaratha's choosing to comment on the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava portion of the Vāmekeśvara Tantra. Pandey is correct when he asserts that Kula tradition is not another name for Abhinavagupta's pratyābhijñā system; he too subscribes to the opinion that it is a broader term indicating the basic principles set forth in the Tantras and the Tantrāloka.[30]

The primary meaning of kula is its literal Sanskrit sense, namely, a family or closely knit group sharing some formal or stated relationship, such as that of student and teacher. This is one of the first meanings attributed by Bhāskararāya in his Saubhāgyabhāskara on the Lalitāsahasranāma. He states plainly that the path is called Kaula because it is connected with a family (kula). It refers to what is obtained in a lineage and through one's own family.[31]

As a genre of Tantric literature characterized by it theories and practices, the Śrīkula Tantras declare themselves a sub-division of the Kaula tradition.[32] However, the assertion that Śrīkula traditions are entirely identical to Śrīvidyā is not shared by all contemporary adepts, especially in south India. According to them, Śrīvidyā is a special form of teaching within the Śrīkula

but not identical to it in all respects. In what respects Śrīvidyā differs from the Śrīkula Tantras is a matter resolved at the level of specific lineages. At the heart of the issue is the rejection of certain Kaula principles, such as the pañcamakāras, among those who harbor caste and religious sentiments that prohibit their inclusion in authoritative scriptures. The result is either an editing of controversial points or the outright rejection of a text as an authoritative source. Contemporary adherents of the Samaya sub-school are at the forefront of this disassociation of Śrīkula Tantras with Śrīvidyā. In general it is clear that the Kaula/Samaya distinction is not based on differing sets of scripture (or on sectarian affiliations) but on differing values and norms for conduct.

The first meaning of kula given by Bhāskararāya may be termed the most general and least technical since it is shared by all Kaulas regardless of denomination. What may seem to be confusion concerning the meanings of kula is more likely a reflection of the Tantric tradition's penchant for layers of meanings woven into complex, interrelated patterns.

On Lalitāsahasranāma (LSN) n.91, Bhāskararāya gives a more Tantric sense to kula, he says that the kula means the succession from the Supreme Śiva to one's own guru and that it refers to a way of life (ācāra) rather than the position

in society in which one is born.[33] In contrast, in the Setubandha Bhāskararāya remarks that kula means whomever belongs to one's own caste (jāti) but that if one follows a certain shared Dharma he or she becomes the same caste, presumably Brahmin.[34] Bhāskararāya has not disposed of caste as a central value in Hindu life. Rather he has shifted its meaning from birth in a particular clan to a shared set of principles and behavioral patterns. The often stated idea that Tantrics "abandon" caste qualification for initiation patently untrue; it is evident here that a transformation of the meaning of caste rather than a vitiation of the concept is at the heart of the issue.

Amṛtānanda, in his Yoginīhṛdayadipikā, gives Kaula a meaning that equates it with Śrīvidyā and by doing so offers one of the clearest definitions of Śrīvidyā tradition stated in Śākta literature. He says Kaulas are those that identify five elements in their spiritual lives, the so-called śrīpañcakam frequently referred to by contemporary adepts: (1) the Self (ātman) identified with the Universal Brahman; (2) the guru; (3) the śrīvidyā, i.e., the fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra; (4) Śrīmata or the Auspicious Mother, that is, Devī in her beneficent aspects; and (5) the śrīcakra.[35] Amṛtānanda's identification of the Kaula path (mārga) with the śrīpañcakam is the first historical definition of Śrīvidyā in sectarian terms.

Bhāskararāya also says that _kula_ means scripture because it explains and is identical to the thought of the worshipper and the object of worship. This also appears to be a definition of scripture itself. The goddess, he goes on to say, is the center of scripture because she is the object of Kula knowledge.[36] But Bhāskararāya continues to distinguish meanings of _kula_ since these, he observes, are preserved in a specific set of scriptures; he quotes the _Paraśurāmakalpasūtra_ (6.39) to the effect that _kula_ sources should be kept secret.[37]

The more esoteric meanings of _kula_ occur beside those already mentioned in the commentaries on _Yoginīhṛdaya_. These begin to draw sectarian lines _within_ Śrīvidyā. Amṛtānanda in his _Dīpikā_ says that _kula_ means the body, a viewed repeated by Bhāskararāya; Kaulas, he goes on to say, are those who remain connected with the outer world.[38] In the _Setubandha_ Bhāskararāya continues a similar line of thought when he says that a Kaula is one who has made the identification of knower, knowing and object of knowledge with the conscious self, the same definition he gives for a Śrīvidyā adept.[39] This idea is repeated in the _Saubhāgyabhāskara_ in slightly different terms; here Bhāskararāya quotes the Kashmiri source _Cidgaganacandrikā_, attributed to Kālīdāsa. He says _kula_ is the measurer (_pramātṛ_), the thing to be measured (_prameya_) and the

measuring (pramāṇa).[40]

In another passage, Amṛtānanda says that since the body is the kula, holding the body to be superior is called the practice of kula (kulācāra) while revering the shoes (pāduka) of the teacher, i.e., following the disciplines taught by the guru, is principled conduct (samayācāra).[41] It is not clear from this single reference if Amṛtānanda is distinguishing the Samayācāra branch of Śrīvidyā that emerges with Lakṣmīdhara. It is only Lakṣmīdhara that treats Samayācāra and Kaula Śrīvidyā as distinct sub-sects. Amṛtānanda does not seem to be aware of the sectarian distinction Lakṣmīdhara formalizes, especially considering the Kaula emphasis on external forms of practice and physical disciplines. Some two hundred years after Amṛtānanda, Lakṣmīdhara makes it clear that Samayins reject the Kaula injunctions for external worship. He instead centers the sectarian distinction on the Samayin's internalizing the entire spiritual discipline, including ritual practice.[42]

Bhāskararāya, a self-proclaimed Kaula, was aware of the internal division within Śrīvidyā but preferred the esoteric, yogic meanings of kula and samaya to Lakṣmīdhara's sectarian interpretations. Though he does not often name Lakṣmīdhara it is clear that he does not endorse all his views. In his remarks on the seven names of the goddess

that mention kula (LSN, n.90-96) and the following two that mention samaya, Bhāskararāya eschews the opportunity to discuss sectarian divisions and instead concentrates on esoteric meanings.[43] He gives a typical Tantric etymology to kula based on esoteric associations rather than strict grammatical formulas. He says ku means the earth and la absorption, that is the mūlādhāra cakra, the lowest of the six basic yogic centers within the body; the central path paralleling the spine, the suṣumnā, is also called kula because it is connected with the mūlādhāra center.[44] Quoting Svacchandatantra he says that the goddess resides in the thousand-petal red lotus at the pericap of the brain and is called kula while in the petals themselves called she is embodied in the kulaśaktis.[45] He then quotes an unnamed Tantra as saying, "'Kula means Śakti, akula, Śiva, and union of Kula with Akula is called Kaula.' Kaula means the essence common to both Śiva and Śakti, hence Devī is called Kaulinī."[46] Abhinavagupta repeats the gist of this remark in the Tantrāloka, which is quite possibly Bhāskararāya's source.[47]

Lakṣmīdhara, however, maintains that the basic stance of the Samayins differs from the Kaulas by a rejection of the pañcamakāras in ritual and the complete internalization of contemplative worship (antaryāga). The rejection of the makāras and Kaula practices, such as kāmakalādhyāna, appears

to follow historical traditions. His claim that the internalization of the ritual is an exclusive Samaya doctrine is more openly debated and rejected by Kaula adepts. In several places in his Saundaryalaharī commentary, Lakṣmīdhara splits the Kaula path in two, according to its Earlier (pūrvakaula) and Later (uttara) forms. The distinction is based on the manner of worship characteristic to them: Pūrvakaulas worship the śrīcakra inscribed in gold, silk or some other substance while the Uttarakaulas perform worship to the female organ.[48] Uttarakaula practices are considered outside the Vedic fold since they involve left-handed practice (vāmācāra), defined as the use of prohibited substances, such as the makāras, and unsanctioned behavior, such as kāmakalādhyāna. According to Lakṣmīdhara, Samaya worship is performed solely within the yogic centers of the body; here the goddess in her subtle forms resides and by worshipping her internally there is no longer any need for external practices (bahiryāga) including those employing ritual substances, gestures (mudrās) or verbalization (including mantras). All ritual becomes a purely mental performance and Lakṣmīdhara leaves no provision for outward manifestations of piety.[49]

Kaulas, on the other hand, not only favor external forms of ritual but sanction the use of the pañcamakāras in controlled ritual circumstances.[50] This does not mean that

by supporting external forms of sacrifice (bahiryāga) Kaulas reject ritual internalization (antaryāga). Bhāskararāya, for example, in his Upaniṣad commentaries discusses at length the transformative qualities of external worship and the process of gradual internalization.[51] Kaula Śrīvidyā practitioners, in fact, maintain the superiority of internal worship (antaryāga) while justifying the need for external rituals and disciplines. Contemporary adepts explain this position by saying that external rites should continue in order to maintain discipline and as an example for those who may never reach stage of internalization.

Lakṣmīdhara, however, asserts that Samaya and Kaula differences are based only on this fundamental distinction: Samayins worship only internally while Kaulas employ external forms.[52] Lakṣmīdhara may have come to this conclusion based on regional and historical influences. It is possible he is describing practices familiar to him since other no other sources appear to offer a scriptural justification.

Lakṣmīdhara's stated preference for norms of behavior and practices acceptable to high caste Hindu worshippers does not exclude non-twice-borns (atraivarṇikas or advija) from Samaya Śrīvidyā. This point should be emphasized since a misstatement of his views has been supported by a host of reputable scholars.[53] In his commentary on verse 32 of

Saundaryalaharī, Lakṣmīdhara states plainly that even outcastes (*śūdras*) can be qualified (*adhikāra*) for contemplative worship (*upāsana*) on the *śrīcakra* while in those rituals designated as Vaidika, *traivarṇika* caste persons are preferred.

Had Lakṣmīdhara restricted Śrīvidyā to only the high castes (*dvijas*) he would have created a precedent in Tantric traditions that undermines one of its chief tenets. Caste or birth *per se* cannot exclude a potential initiate from receiving Tantric teachings. The content of spiritual discipline (*sadhāna*) can be restricted or determined by caste but not access to initiation. Like other Tantrics, Lakṣmīdhara does not dismiss caste but rather distinguishes Tantric and Vedic qualifications. These points are taken up again in the consideration of contemporary traditions.

Lakṣmīdhara also makes theoretical and practical distinctions between Samayins and Kaulas, some of which are upheld by later Kaula commentators, such as Bhāskararāya. In one of their most distinctive interpretive shifts the Samayins maintain that the *śrīcakra* should be envisioned "opposite" to that of the Kaulas: the whole configuration turned upside down, as it were, such that the central *bindu* is no longer in the middle of the central triangle but in the space directly above it.[54] This repositioning is accompanied by a major theological reinterpretation; the

resulting four downward facing major triangles are identified with Śiva while the five upward facing are Śakti. This Samaya version of the <u>śrīcakra</u> still appears in some contemporary traditions but it is certainly not the popular figure nor has Lakṣmīdhara's theological reinterpretation gained a following among contemporary Samayins.[55]

The repositioning of the <u>śrīcakra</u>, Lakṣmīdhara contends, parallels yet another Samaya/Kaula difference. The Kaulas, he says, conceive the <u>śrīcakra</u> only according to the method of dissolution (<u>saṁhārakrama</u>) while Samayācārins prefer the creation method (<u>sṛṣṭikrama</u>). The practical implications of this distinction are straightforward: the dissolution method conceptualizes or "draws" the <u>śrīcakra</u> from the outermost lines towards the central triangle while the creation method begins at the central <u>bindu</u> and expands outward. This alteration implies a major shift in the practice of contemplative worship (<u>upāsana</u>). Later Śrīvidyā Kaulas do not seem to be aware of Lakṣmīdhara's strict identification of methods by schools or at least do not evince any interest. Bhāskararāya passes over the issue as a sectarian distinction and discusses both methods of conceptualizing the <u>śrīcakra</u> with equal deference.[56] Lakṣmīdhara's sectarianism is, once again, unaccounted for in other scriptural sources, suggesting that he describes practices and interpretations familiar to his region and

current to his times.

Contemporary Śrīvidyā does follow Lakṣmīdhara on the so-called left-handed (vāmācāra) and right-handed (dakṣiṇācāra) distinction. The left-handed path, defined as prescribing the use of "prohibited" substances in ritual, such as meat and liquor, and giving license to sex outside of marriage, is identified with the Kaulas. Right-handed worship rejects these practices and follows the "orthodox" norms of Vedic-oriented, high caste smārta Hinduism. Only the right-handed path is deemed appropriate to the Samayins. Lakṣmīdhara's general interpretation is without question the best known meaning of the right/left concepts, though he is perhaps not the first to articulate it. He also seems to reflect the historical situation even though Kaulas may not, in practice, always follow left-handed methods. While Kaula sources sanction these usually prohibited elements and include them as a matter of definition, historical commentators do not always suggest their use to be mandatory or that injunctions are to be taken literally.[57]

Bhāskararāya rejects the interpretation of left- and right-handed worship defined as these practices. Instead he offers a more esoteric distinction based on the acceptance of certain gods in worship.[58] His opinion clearly intends to defy the popular understanding of the left/right distinction. For Bhāskararāya a denial of the pañcamakāra's

appropriateness, for example, would undermine the effectiveness of the Śrīvidyā path.[59] Without naming Lakṣmīdhara, Bhāskararāya rejects his opinions without raising the specter of sectarian concepts. Rather, Bhāskararāya implies that Lakṣmīdhara's Samaya views are a mistaken account of an undivided tradition.

Bhāskararāya also interprets samaya such that one believes that there has been less doctrinal and practical distinction between the two schools than might be assumed from Laksmidhara. On Lalitāsahasranāma n.97 (samayāntaḥstha) Bhāskararāya assents to the idea that samaya worship is internal when he says, "Samaya is commonly...explained as offering worship, etc. to a cakra in the ether of the heart...".[60] He then identifies this teaching with the yogic process of uniting spiritually with the eternal Śiva in a ritual called the Mahāvedha. While the ritual he prescribes is obscure, his general interpretation is not: "The method of effecting this must be learned from a guru. This is what is meant here by samayācāra."[61] He later refers to Samaya as a tradition of teachers and scriptures, "Samaya also means the five books of Vasiṣṭha, Śuka, Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanatkumāra, because they describe this internal worship."[62] But these historical/scriptural sources are also undocumented. (Contemporary oral tradition sheds no light on the matter.)

No texts bearing these names appear either in Bhāskararāya's own references or as independent works.[63] He also etymologizes samaya in a manner not unlike kula. He says sama means equality while ya is the one who attains the goal, thus the term refers to the equality between the goddess and Śiva.[64] Apart from these references, Bhāskararāya makes no explicit mention of the theoretical or practical divisions in Śrīvidyā traditions noted by Lakṣmīdhara.

The split between Kaula and Samaya is, however, far deeper than a disagreement about terminology or even one concerning more theoretical points of divergence, such as the refashioning of the śrīcakra. The central issue revolves around the acceptance or rejection of practices at the heart of Tantric tradition, such as the use of the pañcamakāras and the literal worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna. For Kaulas such as Bhāskararāya these practices help define Śrīvidyā's Tantric character even when they are not accepted literally. Lakṣmīdhara, representing more conservative social and religious forces and hence unwilling to compromise on these issues, instead makes them a significant part of Śrīvidyā's soteriology: only the Samayins, he maintains, achieve the final state of grace and insight.[65] That the majority of Tantric sources do not support Lakṣmīdhara's interpretations cause him no concern.

These sources are simply rejected outright or accepted only as partial truths. Lakṣmīdhara resorts to a hierarchical interpretation that places his own Samayācāra at the apex of possibilities. The guru retains the power to determine which portions of scriptures are authoritative and thus present the "correct" or "highest" forms of worship. In south Indian traditions the controversy and confusion concerning Kaula/Samaya terminology continues though the dispute over the central issue dividing the schools, as Lakṣmīdhara posited it, remains one of the clearest and most important divisions within contemporary Śrīvidyā.

Textual traditions leave the observer at a loss to determine the depth of these historical sectarian differences within Śrīvidyā. One can infer from the evidence that Śrīvidyā either began among high caste persons, most likely _smārta_ Brahmins, not antagonistic to Kaula values, or that Kaula followers were merely the first to codify the tradition in written texts. Śrīvidyā adepts not accepting Kaula values and practices may simply have been initially less involved in the presentation of the tradition in the form of Tantras since they would be ill-disposed to many of the general Kaula principles. The Samaya texts, at least the _Saundaryalaharī_ and other works attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, do not appear on the historical scene until well after the emergence of the written Kaula

Tantras.[66] There is no evidence to suggest that Śrīvidyā was exclusively Kaula from its inception or that Kaula values crept into the system only gradually: both opinions held by contemporary adepts holding opposing interpretations.

Kaulas are not necessarily, as Lakṣmīdhara would have it, "outside" the orthodox Vedic fold; unconventi nal, perhaps, in accepting certain controversial beliefs but not outside the social and religious communities traditionally setting the standards of Hindu orthodoxy. More will be said on this subject and the division of Śrīvidyā into schools in regard to contemporary forms of faith in Part Two. Of particular concern here is that the Kaula/Samaya and Left/Right distinctions have not been as clear as certain historical and contemporary interpreters would have it, especially in the manner of Lakṣmīdhara. Though he continues to exert a powerful influence, Lakṣmīdhara seems in many ways an isolated figure. Later Śrīvidyā commentators pass over his sectarian remarks. Rāmānanda, whose commentaries on the Tripurā and Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣads post-date Lakṣmīdhara, is the only other representative of the Samaya school as Lakṣmīdhara defines it and he does little to support the view that Lakṣmīdhara's Samayācāra represents a pan-Indian situation in the sixteenth century. The Kaula/Samaya confusion is comparable

to the regional divisions within Tantric traditions posited in the *Śaktisaṃgama Tantra*: the Tantra's views appear to reflect a particular regional situation within a given historical setting.[67]

1. Like other Hindus, Śākta Tantrics usually maintain the superiority of their own views without entirely discrediting others, that is to say, other interpretations are ranked loosely below the particular approved stance. Śrīvidyā is not exempt from this general pattern but there is surprisingly little discussion of other sects or philosophical positions. The focus is almost entirely internal. Śrīvidyā commentators delineate their own positions within the boundaries of the tradition's theological definition. This disinterest in "outside" matters reflects the self-contained nature of the tradition but fails to capture the general openness with which other's opinions are greeted. Śrīvidyā's self concern can easily be mistaken: views held in common with others or borrowed are not always acknowledged. This process of assimilation without engaging in formal dialogue--even in the usual philosophical manner of characterizing views in order to reject them---is discussed below.

2. An obvious example is the mantra-wise distinction of the so-called kādi- and hādimatas which is sometimes posed as a distinction based on two separate traditions of ritual and practice. The dearth of historical evidence supporting the view that each mata represents distinctive strands of Śrīvidyā leads to some confusion when reading traditional texts. Commentators often write as if they were, in fact, distinct sub-traditions when evidence seems to point to merely a difference in the construction of the Śrīvidyā mantra.

3. In the case of the Saubhāgyaratnākara, for example, we observe a degree of ritual elaboration that could not have possibly been intended for actual practice. The text and the prescriptions are simply too lengthy to be performed as set forth. We might ask why such elaborations were created at all given the "practical orientation" of the contemporary ritual tradition. The answer seems to be that such texts were created in order to perfect and elaborate patterns of imagery and ritual, that is, for the sake of symmetry, numerology or to create correlations with mythical beliefs, philosophical systems or symbols.

4. This is especially obvious when Śrīvidyā adepts with an affinity to the traditions of Śaṅkara claim their positions to be identical to the Śaṅkara who authored the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya. According to Śaṅkara, for example, no ritual action can bring about a realization of the non-duality of the Self and Brahman. Śrīvidyā, like other Śāktas, maintains a "combination" of ritual and action

viewpoint (sammucayavāda) rather than this strict adherence to an "only knowledge" position. Likewise, Śrīvidyā as a Śākta Tantric sect also accepts a classic bhedābheda view of the nature of reality and does not accept either the ajātivāda of Gauḍapāda or the kevelādvaita position of Śaṅkara.

5. That is, the views of the fourth century Bhartṛhari in his Vākyapadīya.

6. This "original projection" is the śrīcakra, considered tobe the highest expression of the union of Śiva and Śakti.

7. For example, the esoteric interpretation of mantras as originating in the Vedas, it is maintained, proves that Tantric revelations only codify and systematize established views. Another example is the system of the categories of reality (tattvas) which Tantrics claim to have created rather than borrowed from Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools.

8. The śrīvidyā is itself interpreted as a Vedic mantra and identical to both the praṇava and the gāyatrī.

9. See the section on the śrīvidyā for examples.

10. HTSL, p.9f.

11. HTSL, p.9f.

12. HTSL, p.92ff.

13. HTSL, p.92ff.

14. One need only look to the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya to see the variety of sources not strictly within the confines of Śākta Tantrism quoted by Bhāskararāya. Cf., his reference to the Sūtasaṃhitā on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.1.

15. One such example is the Tripurārahasya, the popularity of which has been historically confined almost exclusively to south India. This text also demonstrates how works fade in and out of prominence. Having been a favorite work of the noted Tamil saint Rāmanamahārishi of Tiruvanāmali, TR enjoyed a brief period of attention which now seems to have faded entirely.

16. The PKS makes mention of the prowess of Śrīvidyā adepts in traditional astrology (see PKS, dīkṣakaṇḍa) while Bhāskararāya in the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya demonstrates that his reputation for Vedic ritual is not unfounded. See also

Part Two for instances of contemporary adepts noted for ritual and astrological feats.

17. See Pandey, K.C., Abhinavagupta, An Historical and Philosophical Study. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Publications, reprint of the second edition, 1963, p.546f. Hereafter referred to as "Pandey".

18. Lakṣmīdhara, for example, has little regard for what he terms Kaula systems and practices. Bhāskararāya, on the contrary, like other Kaula theologians seems to permit nearly every possible interpretation and many that do not follow his own.

19. The center of the dispute is Rāmeśvara Sūri's claim that Umānandanātha is not a direct or even a genuine disciple of Bhāskararāya. See the section on the historical development of Śrīvidyā for details of this dispute.

20. HTSL, p.18. Goudriaan summarizes the views of prominent scholars such as Kaviraj and Dwiveda on the historical development of Kaulism. The use of kula in Buddhist Tantric literature may also contribute to an understanding of its origins given its prominence in the early Guhyasamāja Tantra. Robert A.F. Thurman's forthcoming study of this Buddhist work may begin to shed more light on the origins and use of the term kula.

21. Pandey, p.547f.

22. For an overview see HT, pp.47-67.

23. For further discussions of kula and Kaulism see Pandey, p.542ff; HT, p.32f., and p.47f. These works also offer an overview of the concepts of the pañcamakāras and the practice of kāmakalādhyāna.

24. See Bhāskararāya on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.15. Contemporary adepts also frequently cite this work despite the reservations many hold concerning its advocating the pañcamakāras.

25. There are two fine studies of the Kulārṇava Tantra available but both are in Swedish. See Carlstedt, G., Studier i Kulārṇava-Tantra. Uppsala, 1974; and by the same author, Till Kulas Lov, Kulamahātmyakathāna ur Kulārṇava. Uppsala, 1974. See the Bibliography for details.

26. See the section on the śrīvidyā for details.

27. HTSL, p.49

28. This is based on Jayaratha's remark that a commentary by the ninth century Kashmiri Īśānaśiva precedes his own, see HTSL, p.60 and also Pandey, pp.566-571.

29. On the independence of the krama system devoted to Sakta forms of worship see Pandey, p.461ff.; and Rastogi, N., Krama Tantrism. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

30. Pandey, p.543.

31. See Bhāskararāya on LSN, 144.
svasvavaṃsaparamparāprāpto' mārgaḥ kulasaṃbandhitvāt kaulaḥ.

32. See Amṛtānanda's remarks on YH, 1.2-3: also HTSL, p.58.

33. Sastry, p.88.

34. Setubandha on YH, 2.51cd-52ab.

35. YH, 2.51cd-52ab: Note that Setubandha also identifies Śrīvidyā through these five elements.

36. LSN, n.93.

37. LSN, n.91.

38. YH, 2.146-152.

39. YH, 2.146-152.

40. LSN, n.90, see Sastry, p.87.

41. YH, 2.76-80.

42. See Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.11ff; and the chapter on śrīcakra.

43. See Sastry, pp.87-92; and LSN, n.90-99.

44. LSN, n.90.

45. LSN, n.94.

46. Sastry, p.89: see also LSN, n.94.

47. Pandey, p.595.

48. See his remarks on SL, v.41.

49. See his comments on SL, v.32.

50. cf., Bhāskararāya on Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.12.

51. Cf., Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.7.

52. Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.8.

53. This position is maintained by W. Norman Brown and reiterated by Goudriaan in HT, p.33 but a careful reading of Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.31f. clearly shows that his intent was to restrict twice-born persons to Samayācāra and not to restrict it to only the twice-born. Twice-borns may not follow any other form of Śrīvidyā practice, according to Lakṣmīdhara, while others may practice according to Kaula methods. Non-twice-borns are not precluded from Samayācāra. This issue is taken up again in the discussion of the history of Śrīvidyā literature.

54. See Appendix 2 for the Samaya version of the śrīcakra.

55. This issue is taken up in some detail in Part Two.

56. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.2.

57. Cf., Umānanda, NS and the criticism he draws from Rāmeśvara in PKS, 3.31ff.

58. LSN, n.220.

59. See Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.12.

60. Sastry, pp.90-91.

61. LSN, v.98; Sastry, p.91.

62. LSN, n.97; Sastry, p.90.

63. The reference to the Sanatkumāra cannot be the Sanatkumāra Saṃhita, a Pancaratra work, or the Sanatkumaratantra. See HTSL, p.73.

64. LSN, n.97.

65. SL, v.31.

66. On the date of the SL see Brown's Introduction, p.29.

67. See HT, p.43.

Part One
Chapter Two
Earliest Historical Evidence for the Śrīvidyā tradition in Tamil Literature

The Śrīvidyā cult has produced a confusing litany of explanations for its origins both mythologically and historically. Before assessing the tradition's beginnings from its own internal descriptions it is worthwhile to consider the possibility of earlier external, non-sectarian textual and historical evidence establishing Śrīvidyā in a prototypical form.

Śrīvidyā as it emerges in the literary sources of the Śrīkula is a complete sādhana, its ritual and theological symbolism fully mature. Certain elements within the system especially those common to all forms of Śāktism, such as the ritual worship of the goddess by the use of mantras, mudrās and nyāsa, are certainly much older than the elaborate theological speculations found in written sources which discuss more specifics, such as, the relationship of the goddess Lalitā to the śrīcakra.

The earliest Sanskrit sources devoted specifically to Śrīvidyā---sources linking the figure of Lalitā to the śrīcakra and/or fifteen or sixteen syllable mantra---cannot be realistically dated before the eighth or ninth centuries. Sources such as the Devī-, Kālikā-, Liṅga- and Brahmāṇḍapurāṇas frequently cited by later Śrīvidyā adepts

may well harken back to a hoary antiquity but any effort to read Śrīvidyā into these texts is impossible to substantiate historically. The situation is comparable to the prototypical images resembling Śiva found on the coins of pre-Aryan civilizations and cited as "evidence" of the god's ancient worship. Evidence that Śrīvidyā is plainly visible in literature from before the eighth century is at best suggestive and certainly not conclusive.[1] Śrīvidyā sources such as the Lalitāsahasranāma included as part of the Brahmāṇḍapūraṇa and the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, the first part of the Vāmakeśvaratantra, may be much older than their appearance in written forms, reflecting ancient oral traditions, but there is simply no internal textual evidence or historical method that can substantiate these claims.

To establish the earliest possible date for Śrīvidya as it is portrayed in its post-12th century forms one must consider the complex transition from oral to written modes of transmission, the role of secrecy in the diffusion of Tantric thought and the authority of gurus to decide precisely what constitutes a lineage's tradition. It is certainly clear that oral transmission brought Śrīvidyā through an unknown period of development before it was systematized into written forms. While it is very likely that Śrīvidyā is a coherent system long before it takes shape in literary forms, this too is based merely on the

suggestive evidence of the fully developed textual tradition. Whether it simply erupted in a flurry of literary activity, as it has been suggested, seems unlikely considering the precedents of oral transmission elsewhere in Tantrism and the epigraphical evidence linking comparable materials before the emergence of the first written sources.[2]

By how long the oral tradition preceded the written is only a matter of speculation. Some scholars have suggested that Buddhist Tantric materials date from the first centuries of the common era and that Hindu materials may have emerged as early as the fourth century.[3] Determining which texts first codified Śrīvidyā's teachings depends to a large extent on the mention of titles or fragments of text in other sources and whether these provide reliable historical evidence. A comparable example is the mention of a portion of a line which later appears in a Śaiva Āgama and occurs in an inscription at the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcipuram dated to the sixth century Pallava King Rājasiṃhavarman.[4] Is this citation referring to the actual Agamic source that takes a literary form centuries later? Without further specific references it is difficult to substantiate the claim though it has been assumed as evidence for the early appearance of Āgamic texts. Whether this citation refers to a written text bearing a familiar

title that appears in later literature is not yet proven.

The case of the often quoted Rudrayāmala provides another example of verses transmitted orally and retained in lineages attributed to a specific title but remaining undocumented and not occurring in manuscripts bearing the name of the text.[5] The mere mention of titles or the appearance of fragments of texts in either epigraphical forms or in other datable works provides only partial historical evidence. References to forms of practice inseparable from the coherent Śrīvidyā system presented in later sources are necessary to establish its historical presence.

As we have noted, in the narrowest theological sense the Śrīvidyā tradition is defined by the combined presence of the figure of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the śrīcakra and Srīvidyā mantra. Since the śrīcakra and the śrīvidyā are elements in the exclusive domain of Śrīvidyā tradition, their presence suggests at least prototypical forms of worship later systematized. The mere mention of the goddess Lalitā or Tripurā would not suffice in the same way. There is no necessary link between these names of the goddess and Śrīvidyā's characteristic forms of worship or an association with the mantra or yantra. Wherever the śrīcakra or the Śrīvidyā mantra are present, however, there is almost certainly an explicit connection to the beneficent

form of the supreme goddess (parāśakti). The mere mention of Śrīvidyā's mantra or yantra does not indicate its systematic presentation. It does, however, suggest at least a stage in the formation of the tradition.

In south India the identification of local goddesses with Śakti as supreme and beneficent is certainly no later than the sixth century.[6] It is the sixth or seventh century Tamil siddha Tirumūlar who first suggests the presence of some type of Śrīvidyā worship.[7] If Tirumūlar's Tirumantiram is authentic, and there is no reason to believe it is not, and dates from his lifetime or shortly afterward, then we may safely conclude that at least Śrīvidyā's key elements had evolved by the sixth or seventh centuries to warrant mention in the work of poet not directly involved in its exposition. The extent to which these elements were part of a coherent pattern of ritual and theology is not apparent and Tirumūlar offers no clarification. At this time Śrīvidyā may have, in fact, existed in only prototypical forms when compared to the patterns of practice and speculation known to have existed some two to three hundred years later in south India. Since there is no comparable evidence in north Indian vernacular sources, it is impossible to evaluate Śrīvidyā's regional diffusion prior to its emergence as a fully mature written tradition in about the ninth century.[8] The śrīvidyā's presence in the

Tirumantiram indicates that at least elements of Śrīvidyā tradition existed before seventh century. By whom the mantra was used and how it was incorporated into a larger pattern of worship remains a mystery.

It is not clear if Tirumūlar's mention of these elements indicates the existence of a tradition identifying itself primarily with them. From the nature of his remarks there is evidently a good deal of speculation on the esoteric meaning of the Śrīvidyā mantra in the circles of yogis and siddhas. These speculations, concerning the identification of colors and sounds, do not appear to have carried over directly into the interpretations of later adepts.

Traditionally counted among the sixty-four Tamil Nāyaṉmār poet/saints of the Śaivas, Tirumūlar was a siddha, an accomplished yogi whose supranormal powers and bizarre personality are legendary.[9] When compared to the works of other Nāyaṉārs, especially the later Tiruñāṉasampantar and Appar, Tirumūlar's works are fragmentary and unsystematic in presentation. What is lacking in continuity of theme and subject, however, is made up by the suggestive quality of the poetry and its powerful command of archaic Tamil. It is not unlike a siddha such as Tirumūlar to shift topics whimsically even within the same stream of thought. Thus, Tirumantiram is best described as a concatenation of

loosely related verses whose order of presentation and themes are only disparately connected. Zvelebil suggests that the continuity of the Tirumantiram lies in its integration of Upaniṣadic wisdom, yoga, bhakti and the influences of the Tantric movement.[10]

As the title of the work itself suggests (Tirumantiram in Tamil means Śrīmantra in Sanskrit), the Tirumantiram was not meant solely for poetic expression or as a series of devotional verses.[11] Many verses are little more than obscure, mystical expressions of transcendence or recitations of mantras. These mantras are rendered into a cryptic, poetical Tamil evincing strong Sanskritic influences. It would seem that they were as difficult to decipher for sixth century readers as they are to twentieth century philologists and, in fact, even cursory study demonstrates that they cannot be translated using strict philological methods. Indeed it is quite clear that Tirumūḷar deliberately intended the verses to convey something other than literal or even poetic meaning: the mantras as sounds were themselves sources of power and expressions of divine revelation.

Tirumantiram, 1282, the first verse of the twelfth chapter entitled Puvanāpati cakkaram (Sanskrit, Bhuvanāpati cakra), is an explicit reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra in its fifteen syllable according to the kādimata

interpretation.[12] The first letter of each of the śrīvidyā's three kūṭas (here called vidyās) occurs as the first Tamil letter of the first word in each of the verse's three lines. The Tamil configuration makes this evident:

kakarāti yoraintun kanīya ponmai
akarāti yorarārattame poḻūm
cakarārati yornankun tancutta vēnmai
kakarāti muittai kamīya muttiyē [13]

Though in its Sanskrit configuration the second kuṭa of the srīvidyā begins with the syllable ha rather than a, as the second line of Tamil verse begins, this is a result of the substitution in literary Tamil of a for ha. Ha is not, strictly speaking, a part of the literary language. In the third line of the verse the Tamil ca is the common letter used for all three forms of the Sanskrit sibilant and should be taken as the first Sanskrit sa.

The semantic meaning of the verse, however, also draws an explicit reference to the śrīvidyā. Given the archaic and poetical language it might be translated:

The letter ka and five other letters are golden colored.
The letter a [i.e., ha] and the six are red in color.
The four letters beginning with ca [i.e., sa] are pure white.
The three vidyās [i.e., kūṭas] beginning with ka give desired liberation.

There are, to my knowledge, no references to the Śrīvidyā mantra this explicit in other texts of this period.

Tirumūlar makes no further mention of the mantra nor does he say anything concerning its place in his own spirituality. Its being the _kādi-_ variety of the _śrīvidyā_ only reinforces the idea that the _hādi-_ and other forms, either practiced or theoretical, were derivations of _kādi-_, or historical afterthoughts developed to complete a larger pattern of speculation. It is not, I hasten to add, conclusive evidence that only the _kādi-_ form was in vogue---Tirumūlar's failure to mention other forms of the _srīvidya_ may not even mean this was the only form he knew.

Tirumūlar's explanation of the mantra as tripartite is significant since this customary division reappears as part of later systematic presentations of Śrīvidyā---the three portions of the mantra's fifteen letters are identified with three portions of the goddess' anthropomorphic form and are each associated with different sets of spiritual accomplishments.[14] The three _kūṭa_ (literally, peak) configuration suggests that this basic interpretive principle was apparently known in Tirumūlar's day even to those evincing only marginal interest in other aspects of its practice.

While the reference to the mantra is unmistakable, the contexts in which it occurs adds little to clarify its place in Tirumūlar's own thought. The verse does not, curiously enough, occur in the section dedicated by title to Tripura.

Modern Srīvidya adepts point to the peculiar nature of the siddha to explain this discrepancy.[15] Literary study of Tirumantiram offers many examples of seemingly out of context statements and a disregard for systematic (or even coherent) presentation of ideas.

We may only conclude that in the seventh century in south India the Śrīvidyā mantra was well-known and important enough to be mentioned in the work of a traditional yogi not directly associated with the sect either historically or mythically. The śrīvidyā's mention in Tirumantiram affirms that it was established as part of general and popular mantric lore and that speculations on its meanings had already begun in earnest.

Tirumantiram verses 1021-1050 describe the goddess Tripura and the so-called Tripurā cakra under the heading cattipetam tiripurai cakkaram.[16] The figure of Tripurā described here is the familiar aspect of the goddess emerging in full form in the Lalitāsahasranāma.[17] Tirumūḷar does not, however, make any connection between this image of Tripurā and the śrīvidyā as mentioned in verse 1282; nor does he link Tripurā to the śrīcakra. Instead he describes a separate Tripurā cakra whose connection with the śrīcakra cannot reasonably be conjectured. The Tripurā cakra described here is not a part of later Śrīvidyā tradition nor does it emerge again in any later Tantric

literature. It appears to have faded into obscurity possibly by virtue of the later (?) identity of Tripurā with the śrīcakra.

From these verses it is clear that Tripurā in her inveterate anthropomorphic form is identified with Parāśakti, the supreme deity, and that her worship is popularly known in south India by Tirumūlar's time. She was associated with a Tripurā cakra but not, at least in Tirumantiram, with the śrīcakra. On the basis of the available literary evident it is simply not possible to say if Tirumūlar made any connections between Tripurā, the Tripurā cakra and the śrīvidyā. Tripurā's mention in terms of divine superiority is itself rather remarkable considering Tirumūlar's overwhelming Śaiva orientation. Like other Nāyaṉārs, Tirumūlar was committed to the absolute sovereignty of Śiva in the divine pantheon, Śakti is only a secondary figure in his theology.

There is, however, suggestive evidence for the presence of the śrīcakra in south India in the seventh century in yet another section of Tirumantiram. In verses 894-978 under the section entitled Tiruvampalam cakkaram Tirumūlar describes the cakra or a portion of it associated with the worship of Naṭarāja at Cidambaram. The name Tiruvambalam, appearing as the section heading in Tirumantiram, is an unambiguous reference to the city of Cidambaram as it is

known in old Tamil. In these verses Tirumūlar discusses some seven varieties of Śiva cakras including a portion of the so-called sammelanacakra associated with the secret (rahasya) form of Naṭarāja. The connection of the sammelanacakra with śrīcakra is discussed in Part Two as is the relationship of Tripurā and Śrīvidyā tradition with the consort of Naṭarāja, Śivakāmasundarī. Of interest here is Tirumūlar's clear reference to the sammelanacakra of Cidambaram, an unmistakable reference to the so-called cidākāśarahasya that appears beside the Naṭarāja's figure in the temple.

If this Śiva yantra and the sammelanacakra can be linked to the śrīcakra then there is strong evidence suggesting the presence of elements of Śrīvidyā in established Śaiva temple worship from at least the sixth century. The evidence confirming the relationship of the sammelanacakra to the śrīcakra, however, comes only in the thirteenth century work of Umāpatiśivācarya.[18] The part of the cakra discussed by Tirumūlar is only the "Śiva portion" of what is described as a combination of Śiva and Śakti elements.[19] In verse 928 he says that the author of the tiruvambalam cakkaram is Śiva himself and, in v.930, that the totality of creation in the form of the brahmāṇḍa is nothing other than the tiruvambalam. Whether the tiruvambalam cakkaram known to Tirumūlar includes the Śakti

portion of the sammelanacakra is a matter for further investigation since the Śakti portion of the yantra has long been suspected by Śrīvidyā devotees to be a portion of the śrīcakra.[20] If the tiruvambalam cakkaram is wholly identical to a portion of the sammelanacakra then there may indeed be enough evidence to accept the presence of at least prototypical Śrīvidyā in the sixth or seventh centuries practiced as part of a Brahmin-dominated form of temple worship. This form of Śrīvidyā we can be assured did not include the Kaula elements that were rejected by later Samayins.

South Indian tradition maintains that the sammelanacakra was part of the original portions of the Cidambaram Naṭarāja temple. Being within the golden-domed kanaka sabhā there seems little reason to doubt that the cakra of Naṭarāja was part of the temple tradition's worship from at least the period of this construction, certainly no later than the sixth century. No other cakra or configuration has been historically or traditionally associated with Cidambaram Naṭarāja. Tirumūlar's failure to mention the Śakti portion of the yantra or the śrīcakra explicitly does not preclude the possibility that his tiruvambalam cakkram is, in fact, a portion of the sammelanacakra. Tirumūlar was preoccupied with Śiva, the absence of a mention of Śakti does not mean she was absent

from the scene. If the hypothesis is valid then the composition of the mysterious cidākāśarahasya is at least partially solved by Tirumūlar. In verse 884 he supplies a description of the Śiva aspect of the cakra.

> Draw six lines vertically and six horizontally, thus you create five squares by five and within these are written the syllables of the Śiva mantra.[21]

As noted, the further clues linking the śrīcakra to the sammelanacakra appear historically much later in the work of the thirteenth century Umāpatiśivācarya. Suffice to say there is good reason to believe from Tirumūlar's references that the traditional view of the sammelanacakra as a combination of a Śiva cakra with the śrīcakra is not only plausible but likely.

With evidence pointing to the existence of Srividya's characteristic elements within the Śaiva temple cult as early as the sixth century we can hypothesize further concerning the period of composition for Śrīkula sources. Given the extensive development of Śrīvidyā's elements by Kashmiri figures and the early references to the Kaula movement in north India, it is likely that the formative period of the school's theology also took place in north India.[22] It had moved south by the time of Tirumūlar and perhaps earlier if the evidence at the Cidambaram temple is conclusive. This would lead us to believe that mantra and

yantra development within Śrīvidyā comes from a period before the sixth century. If Kālīkula sources are, as Goudriaan says, well before the Śrīkula then these elements in prototypical or unsystematic forms too must be pushed back to a period before the sixth century.[23] This hypothesis is hardly novel but it is perhaps the first time it has been presented with at least some historical and literary references.

The <u>śrīcakra</u>'s presence within the Cidambaram temple in the sixth or seventh century means it was part of the approved worship of Vaidikas. Its original development then might well have been among Vaidikas not opposed to its being associated with Tantric values. In his discussion of the earliest strands of Tantric literature in Sanskrit Goudriaan remarks,

> It was not based upon a popular movement, but was the outgrowth of the specialist position of an intellectual elite of religious functionaries from the upper classes, as a rule of Brahmans.[24]

Our evidence not only corroborates Goudriaan's point but suggests a developed ritual tradition accompanying the formation of such Tantric concepts as yantra worship from a period well before the emergence of written sources. Śrīvidyā's Tantrism did not develop strictly as an alternative to Vaidika spirituality, as some Tantric schools did, but in consonance with it, responding to a need for

greater ritual and speculative sophistication.

1. See Gonda, Jan, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, reprint edition, 1985, p.25f.; first published in 1965 as Vol. IX in Disputationes Rheno-Trajectinae, Berlin: Mouton Publishers. Here Gonda argues convincingly that the images of ascetical-looking gods such as the those on the seals of Harrappan civilization while bearing a resemblance to later images of Śiva are not evidence that the Indus Valley culture was already worshipping a proto-Śiva image. In the same way, while there is circumstantial evidence for the worship of the goddess Lalita in ancient times as recorded in the purāṇas there is no method for asserting an historical link between names and places and the actual worship of the deity.

2. See Eliade, Mircea, Yoga, Immortality and Freedom. Princeton: University Press, 1958, p.200. Here the author argues, seemingly without historical evidence, that Tantrism arose suddenly in its literary forms. Literary evidence, however, suggests that the oral tradition's transition to written forms was more gradual and served to systematize an already mature ritual and speculative tradition. In support of this theory is internal literary in the Tantras such as the repetition of whole passages in a number of different texts and the fact that certain passages seem to find there way into sources based on regional factors and the gradual diffusion of ideas. When Śrīvidyā does emerge textually it is in such a state of sophistication that it seems implausible that its oral traditions were not in a comparable state of "completeness". In other words, the transition to written forms follows only after the oral traditions have at least marginally solidified sources.

3. Dr. Lokesh Candra of New Delhi also claims to have evidence supporting his theory that Buddhist Tantric materials had established themselves in fixed form from the first century, C.E. His work supporting this theory is forthcoming.

4. See Chakravarti, Ch., The Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literature, Calcutta: University Press, 1963, p.20; see also Farquhar, J.N., An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, London: Oxford University Press, 1920, p.193.

5. See HTSL, p.47f. An example of this is also seen in the relatively recent Bhāskararāya. See his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.7. Here he quotes RY and yet the quotation does not occur in mss. or printed editions of the text.

6. It may, in fact, be much earlier given theories of goddess worship in Dravidian culture, see Eliade, Yoga, pp.200-210 for a discussion of this suggestion.

7. On Tirumūlar and other Tamil poets see Zvelebil, K.V., Tamil Literature. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1974 (in A History of Indian Literature, Vol. X, fasc.1, edited by Jan Gonda) and also Tamil Literature. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975 (Handbuch der Orientalistik, II-2-I).

8. On the dating of early Tantric literature see HTSL, p.21ff.

9. On Tirumūlar's life and personality see Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (Handbuch), p.68.

10. See Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (History of Indian Lit.), p.55.

11. Tirumūlar defines a mantra as the "perfect concentration of the mind of anything." See Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, (History of Indian Lit.), p.55.

12. See Thiru Manthiram of Tirumūlanāyaṉār, Vol. 1, in Tamil, edited by Thiru P. Ramanatha Pillai. Tirunevoli, Tamil Nāḍu, India: The South Indian Saiva Siddhānta Works Publishing Society, 1957, second revised edition. (Pages are not numbered, see v.1282, the first verse of chapter twelve.)

13. Ibid, v.1282, chapter 12.

14. See the section below on the anthropomorphic aspect of Lalita.

15. One adept explained that the discrepancy is simply part of the unpredictable nature of the siddha. Another, more plausible explanation is that the compilers of the Tirumantiram (since Tirumūlar composed it only in an oral form) did not always understand the meaning of verses and that the compilation itself depends on their untrustworthy memories. Consequently verses can be scattered or confused and there is no clear method for discerning which verses belong to which chapter.

16. Tirumantiram as cited above.

17. For a full description see the section on the sthūla aspect of the Goddess.

18. See Part Two for the details of this historical link.

19. See *Tirumantiram*, v. 884. On the *śrīcakra* as a combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras see Venkataraman, K.R., "Śakti Cult in South India" in *A Cultural History of India*, edited by Haridas Bhattacharyya. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1956, second edition, Vol. IV, p.256.

20. Ibid, p.256; this opinion is commonly held by members of the "Guru" Mandali in south India and is also maintained by various other individual adepts from a broad range of lineages.

21. See *Tirumantiram*, v.884, the text reads: **tiruvampalāmakac circcak karāttait/tiruvampalamaka irāru kirit/tiruvampalamaka irūupattain cakkit/tiruvampalamākac cepikkirai varē//**

22. See Dwiveda, V.V., *Upodghāta* (Introduction) to the edition of the *Nityāsodaśikārnava* (In Sanskrit) for a discussion of the origins of Tantric literature in north India and its relation to Matsyendranāth. Also Dwiveda, V.V., "tripurādarśanasyaparicita ācāryaḥ kṛtayaśca", appearing in *Tantrayantra, essays on Tantra-Āgama Thoughts and Philosophy, Literature, Culture and Travel*. Varanasi: Ratna Publications, 1982, pp.64-78.

23. *HTSL*, pp.9-10.

24. *HTSL*, p.9.

Part One
Chapter Three
Śrīvidyā in Text and History: Tantras and Early Sources

A. Determining Śrīvidyā Sources

Distinguishing Śrīvidyā sources and figures within the corpus of Śākta Tantric literature is an important step for determining its theological and historical continuities.[1] The majority of adepts, however, eschew any effort to limit Śrīvidyā's textual sources to a specific set of works and instead prefer more inclusive self-definitions that locate the tradition within the larger scope of Tantric and Vedic literature. For whom would a narrow textual or theological self-definition be necessary? Śrīvidyā's historical adepts rarely found a need to make such formal distinctions. As one contemporary adept put it:

> We are aware that Śrīvidyā is a special discipline and we keep it secret to protect those not ready for its teachings. But we do not wish to draw unnecessary attention to ourselves. In this sense, we wish to be seen as simply Hindus. We do not consider Śrīvidyā a sect but the source of all teachings. So I may discuss Visnu or Śiva or any other god and any other topic, but this does not interfere with my own tradition. We do not concern ourselves with being called Tantrikas or Vaidikas, though I consider myself both. Since Śrīvidyā is the vidyā of vidyās it is proper to use any text that contributes to its wider interpretations.[2]

Despite these remarks one also finds a startling lack of interest among contemporary adepts either in other traditions or in the teachings of other Śrīvidyā lineages.[3]

Śrīvidyā's Tantric character is exemplified by its emphasis on privacy and secrecy, elements that contributed to its long remaining purely oral in transmission. Historical adepts identify themselves as Śrīvidyā followers in written works dating from at least the eleventh century, yet even at this stage it is more a matter of association with the tradition's theological elements than a strict sectarianism. In other words, Śrīvidyā adepts have not always defined themselves _vis a vis_ other Tantrics (or other Hindus, for that matter) or as adherents to specific philosophical tenets but in terms of their allegiance to the unique combination of features that define the tradition.

It is not long after Tirumūlar, in the sixth or seventh centuries, that Śrīkula sources and those specific to Śrīvidyā begin to emerge in written forms. When these sources are committed to writing, however, systematic forms of ritual, symbolism and speculative theology are already fully developed. Of particular concern to the present study are those figures and texts that have made a significant impact on the historical and theological development of Śrīvidyā in south India.

While a enormous number of texts dedicated to the theology of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, the _śrīvidyā_ and the _śrīcakra_ have been composed, relatively few have left a significant mark on the pan-Indian tradition. Several have

had only a regional impact such as the Tripurārahasya (TR) a source widely known only in the south.[4]

B. The Śrīkula Tantras and Other Early Sources

The Śrīkula Tantras are traced in Kashmiri traditions to a period roughly concurrent to Tirumūlar's reference to the Śrīvidyā mantra.[5] Many of the Śrīkula Tantras make explicit references to the worship of Tripurā, the śrīvidya and śrīcakra but only four can be considered as committed to the position that Śrīvidyā is the preeminent form of Śākta worship. The foremost of these must also be considered the oldest presentation of the tradition.

Vāmākeśvara Tantra (VT) is actually two separate works, the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava (NSA), also known as the Catuḥśatī since it consists of four hundred verses, and the Yoginīhṛdaya (YH), called by some commentators the Sundarīhṛdaya.[6] Historically, this material is treated both separately and as a unified text. Howerver it is treated, VT is the most elaborate exposition of Śrīvidyā tradition found in any single Śrīkula source.[7] As Goudriaan has remarked:

> Both...[texts] testify to a complete mastery of the subject which appears as a full-grown system... There can be no doubt that here we have two of the most accomplished products of Hindu Tantric literature. It is clear that these texts are still within the learned tradition which produced the intellectual masterpieces of Kashmir Śaivism.[8]

There can be little disputing Goudriaan's placement of the text(s) within the Kashmiri intellectual tradition. Śrīvidyā, like other Śākta sects, incorporates practically the entire speculative foundation of Kashmiri Śaivism into its theology.[9] Particularly evident in VT is the emphasis on creation through sound in three distinct stages, that is, paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī, a subject of much elaborate discussion among Kashmiri Śaivas such as Abhinavagupta. It is this creation theory that the VT parallels to the formation of the śrīcakra.

The earliest commentaries on VT are of Kashmiri origin though the text must have spread to the south in the early diffusion of the written tradition. It is not known if early Tantras such as VT spread from local origins orally before taking written forms though, if other Tantric traditions are any indication, there is no reason to reject this possibility.

It is also evident that the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava is the earlier of the two portions of the Tantra. No commentary appears in name or form on the YH until the 14th century though the Tantrarāja Tantra (TT) (also known as the Kādimata Tantra), a source certainly not later than the twelfth century, lists it as an old text.[10] The earliest extant commentary on the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava belongs to Jayaratha, the twelfth century Kashmiri best known as the

author of the Vivaraṇa on Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka.[11] He comments upon only the NSA, which he calls Vāmakeśvarīmata, and does not seem to be aware of the YH. He remarks that Vāmakeśvarīmata was commented upon earlier by Īśvaraśiva, a prominent ninth century Kashmiri thinker.[12] Pandey suggests that Jayaratha's reference to Īśvaraśiva as the avatāraka or "one who brought down" the text, indicates that it was Īśvaraśiva who first systematized this presentation of the tradition.[13] Other than Jayaratha's literary reference to Īśvaraśiva there is no historical data concerning the appearance of this early commentary in either written or oral forms. Its verses are not cited in later sources. Since Jayaratha's commentary concludes after verse 33 of the fifth chapter while later commentators extend the text eleven more verses the possibility remains that the text either continued to expand or that different regional recensions existed.[14] Another early commentary attributed to Śaṅkararāsi, a contemporary of Īśvaraśiva, is discussed in Kashmiri tradition but this too has unfortunately not survived.[15]

It would appear then that Śrīvidyā had taken a fully mature written form by the twelfth century. If Silburn is correct in dating Maheśvarānanda to the twelfth century then it is entirely possible that Śivānanda's NSA commentary, entitled Ṛjuvimārsinī, must come from sometime in the

eleventh century since Śivānanda is frequently referred to by Maheśvarānanda as his teacher's teacher.[16] Maheśvara is a central figure in the development of the Kashmiri intellectual tradition and while he evinces no direct interest in Śrīvidyā both his grand-teacher Śivānanda and his pupil Puṇyānanda devote a major work to its exposition.[17] This connection further reinforces the historical ties between predominantly Śaiva Kashmiris and Śrīvidyā Śāktas. It also suggests that some interpret Śrīvidyā more as a distinctive mode of worship than as a sectarian tradition.

Among southern authors the distinctions between Śaiva and Śākta forms of worship are more pronounced. Unlike in Kashmir where Śaivas and Śāktas consider themselves within the encompasssing and common Kula tradition, in southern India these commonalities break down. Sectarian features are stressed because there is no comparable overarching historical-theological continuity within Śaiva intellectual movements and literature. Early southern Śaiva figures such as Tirumūlar or the Tamil poets Appar and Tiruñāṉasampantar express little interest in Śākta-centered theology and do not link themselves to Kula Tantrism. Ideas common to later southern Śākta Tantrics, such as Bhāskararāya, and medieval Śaivas are not traced to a mutual interest in Kula sources but to the more tangentially related Saiva Siddhānta

sources. These Saiva Siddhānta sources share with Kula Tantrism such important theological principles as the thirty-six tattvas and have historical links to Kashmir but do not belong to the Kula Tantric tradition. A characteristic example is, Umāpatiśivācārya, the southern Śaiva thinker of the thirteenth century who links Śrīvidyā with Śaivism in his devotional poem to Naṭarāja, the Kuñchitāṅghristava. He does not comment upon Kula sources but rather focuses his life's work on Saiva Siddhānta tradition. Tantric Śāktism in south India did not emerge in a common intellectual milieu as it did in Kashmir, but neither was it lacking commonalities with the south's dominant Śaiva/Śākta theological movements, such as Saiva Siddhānta, nor necessarily at odds with them.

Regarding the historical diffusion of Śrīvidyā sources, Goudriaan disagrees with Silburn and maintains that the Kashmiri Śivānanda was originially a Keralite who migrated to the north and flourished in the latter part of the thirteenth century. This opinion, it seems, is based on Dwiveda's conclusions which are less than entirely convincing.[18] Until there is more evidence to the contrary, Silburn's dates for Maheśvara remain equally plausible.

Chronologically the next extant commentary on the NSA belongs to Vidyānandanātha who follows Sivānanda. He refers to him in his own NSA commentary entitled Artharatnāvali.

He was a south Indian though he is not to be confused with Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa, a prominent Śrīvidyā author of the south best known for his elaborate ritual compilation, the Saubhāgyaratnākāra. The confusion ensues because both figures share the same initiated name (dīkṣānāma).[19] Since the eighteenth century Bhāskararāya refers to both Śivānanda and the later Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa it appears that Vidyānanda, author of Artharatnāvali, belongs to the intervening period.

These three Kashmiri-based commentaries, namely, the works of Jayaratha, Śivānanda and Vidyānanda, provide the basis for all further historical interpretations of the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava. Among contemporary adepts in south India only Jayaratha's work appears to have gained any popularity, the other two, though presently in print, are known only by Bhāskararāya's references. According to Jayaratha there are at least seven more Kashmiri tradition commentaries on the text but none appear to have survived.[20] There is a noticable lack of extant southern (or even Bengali) commentaries on the text but this does not preclude the possibility of there having been such works, nor does it mean that Tantrism or Śrīvidyā lacked support in the southern region.

Bhāskararāya's commentary, entitled the Setubandha, is the only major work that covers both portions of VT. He states explicitly that the Yoginīhṛdaya takes up matters

left unclear in the NSA. This commentary, remarkable for its detailed exposition of technical speculative and ritual matters, directly refers to the three Kashmiri commentaries. Bhāskararāya also mentions traditions, opinions and earlier vṛttis that do not appear in the cited Kashmiri sources. Though constrained by the format of commentary on a specific text, the Setubandha consolidates and, to some extent, anthologizes Śrīvidyā's tenets, values and practices. It is to Śrīvidyā tradition in south India what Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka is to Kashmiri Śaivism: the authoritative and encyclopedic sourcebook for the entire tradition that follows it.

Abhinavagupta (Tantrāloka, 28.123) refers to a Nitya Tantra, another name associated with the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, but this appears to be another text altogether. The NSA postdates itself to the Rudrayāmala since it explictly states that it deals with matters left out in the latter.[21] Pandey believes it is certainly posterior to the Jñānārṇava Tantra, another of the Śrīkulā Tantras advocating Śrīvidyā.[22] The title of text in any form fails to appear in any of the traditional lists of sixty-four Tantras though Bhāskararāya claims it to be the independent sixty-fifth suggested in the SL.[23] It is difficult to place the original text of the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava before the eighth century given the present state of historical evidence,

though its influence over the centuries has been felt among Tantrics beyond Śrīvidyā's relatively narrow circles.[24] Given Jayaratha's claim that there existed two ninth century commentaries it is safe to assume that at least the NSA portion of VT dates from well before the eighth century.

The contents of the NSA are ably summarized by Goudriaan.[25] The title is noteworthy, literally, "The Ocean of the Sixteen Nityās", since it refers to the sixteen "eternal" goddesses identified with the phases (kalā) of the moon.[26] The text itself has rather little to do with this form of worship especially in comparison to the extensive treatment given in the later Tantrarāja Tantra. The reason for this curious title may be due to Śrīvidyā's association with the systematic worship of these sixteen deities. (The tradition also shares the common Śākta theory that describes the "particularization" (kalā) of the one Brahman into thirty-six categories of entities (tattvas).) Śrīvidya, however, specifically develops the ritual worship of the nityās in relation to the śrīcakra.[27] The sixteen nityās are also part of general mantric theory shared by Śakta Tantrism in which they are identified with the vowels of Sanskrit; Śrīvidyā incorporates this into its own speculative structure by including it as part of the śrīcakra pūjā. It elaborates further by identifying the nityās with the sixteen syllables of the śrīvidyā mantra.

Especially significant is Śrīvidyā's use of the nityās to help in formulating a theological identity. Though the nityās are of minor importance in the larger structure of its ritual tradition, Śrīvidyā not only affords them a place (as other Tantrics do) but systematically develops their worship and symbolism such that its own sectarian identity is, at least to some degree, bound to them. A point, it might be added, that is not lost on the author of the Tantrarāja Tantra.

The second portion of Vāmakeśvara Tantra, the Yoginīhṛdaya begins with the goddess asking for a further explanation of points left unclear in the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, thus providing the basis for Bhāskararāya's claim of textual continuity.[28] Its three chapters on the secret meanings of the śrīcakra, srīvidya and the worship (pūjā) of the goddess are the most detailed exposition of Srīvidyā's inner core of teachings available in any primary Tantric source. Bhāskararāya explains the structure of the VT by observing that the NSA explains external forms of worship (bahiryāga) while the YH gives the meaning of internal worship (antaryāga).[29] The two portions of the Tantra, he emphasizes, are merely sections of a single work.

Amṛtānanda, the Kashmiri pupil of Puṇyānanda who authored the authoritative Kāmakalāvilāsa (KKV), is best

known for his commentary on the YH portion of the Tantra from the so-called hādi perspective.[30] Though he does not say so explicitly, Amṛtānanda may well believe that the YH originates among hādimata followers. In anycase, his adherence to the hādi interpretation does not seem to have diminished his importance to contemporary Śrīvidyā traditions either in north or south, traditions dominated, as the historical tradition itself appears to be, by the kādi school.

Amṛtānanda both here and in his other works exhibits a depth of interpretation characteristic of Kashmiri Kula Tantra intellectuals. He often clarifies the text's dense and technical material and draws freely upon materials common to the broader Tantric tradition without diluting his own committment to Srīvidyā. Unlike Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha, Amṛtānanda relies on a more straightforward and less technical approach to the subject.

Assuming other historical commentaries or at least traditional oral interpretations have existed according to different lines of transmission, none seem to have left a major imprint on the contemporary tradition in south India. Bhāskararāya remains the focus of attention for the majority in the living tradition and those who challenge his views are as quick to cite him as those who claim his spiritual legacy or support his interpretations. One should not

underestimate the impact of the Setubandha on the later development of Śrīvidyā traditions in south India: all existing avenues of interpretation lead eventually to this source.

There are three obvious and interrelated reasons why Bhāskararāya has attained such a status in contemporary south India. (1) He is the the most recent figure to emerge as an authority within Śrīvidyā, one whose reputation for spiritual and literary achievements goes beyond the sectarian concerns of the school. Bhāskararāya is saint whose spiritual achievements are recognized as part of popular lore. (2) He settled in Tamil Nāḍu in Thañjavur district in the village of Bhāskararājapuram on property that was granted to him by the Maratha ruler Seforji. His links to the land, though no longer maintained, have made him a son of Tamil Nāḍu despite his having been an immigrant from the north.[31] His political patronage clearly contributed to his spiritual fame and his gifted property provided him the means to teach. (3) His presence in the south has led to claims of continuity in his lineage up to the present day. Several contemporary lineages in Tamil Nāḍu today trace their descent from Bhāskararāya and his pupils.

Bhāskararāya's encyclopedic knowledge of Śrīvidyā allows him to speak authoritatively and at the same time

draw upon the opinions of others, including the three Kashmiri commentators. The Setubandha, along with the independent treatise, the Varivasyarahasya, and the commentaries on Lalitāsahasranāma and the Bhavanā and Tripurā Upaniṣads are today the most widely read and definitively regarded sources in south Indian Śrīvidyā. Bhāskararāya has eclipsed others by responding with his own convincing arguments---but hardly ever does he make his points at his opponent's expense. The overwhelming impression he has left is that of tolerance for other's opinions and ways of life. Though committed to the belief that his own religious path is superior he manages to accomodate others without patronizing or antagonizing them. Like the historical Śaṅkarācārya his works are firm in their convictions but totally lacking in vindictiveness. No Śrīvidyā adept since has matched his traditional authority; and because he travelled and lived in northern India Bhāskararāya's influence extends beyond regional boundaries. Not even the prolific Amṛtānanda, whose Cidvilāsastava and Saubhāgyasudodaya are outstanding literary pieces as well as significant contributions to Śrīvidyā theology, has comparably influenced the pan-Indian tradition.[32]

Tantrism's penchant for secrecy has undoubtedly contributed to the unfortunate historical lacuna regarding other commentaries on the Vāmakeśvara Tantra. It is

difficult to trace the links between the Kashmiri traditions' interpretation of the text and its popularity in south India but it is clear from the diffusion of manuscripts that Kashmiri authors enjoyed nearly as much popularity in the southern regions as they did in their homeland. Precisely when Kashmiri sources reached the south is uncertain though the process is certainly complete before Bhāskararāya. The same degree of influence cannot be attributed to works originating in Bengal. This may be due to the Bengali Śāktism having been dominated by Kalikula rather than Śrīkula traditions. It is a curious footnote to these relations within Śrīvidyā between Kashmir and Tamil Nāḍu to observe connections with other traditions, notably Saiva Siddhānta and traditions of dance and aesthetics.[33] As one contemporary adept said:

> There is a special relationship between Śrīvidyā in Kashmir and in the south, especially here in Tamil Nāḍu. There was much exchange between the two regions and it is our belief that Saiva Siddhānta was deeply influenced by Kashmiri Śaivism. This is a point that Tamil purists [sic] will never admit. The regional distinctions in Śrīvidyā are more pronounced between the south and Bengal, and between the worship in Kerala and in the other southern states. The Kashmiri tradition is not unlike our own though I believe their interest in more philosophical matters is the reason why the ritual tradition is no longer so easily found.[34]

A later and still more detailed exposition of Śrīvidya occurs in the Kādimata Tantra, known popularly as the Tantrarāja Tantra, and referred to more frequently by the latter name in the works of Śrīvidyā votaries.[35] The Tantra in its written form is certainly no later than the ninth century.

The author's initial contrast of Kādimata traditions from those termed Kālīmata is no longer maintained in contemporary southern circles. There appear to be no other historical references regarding the unstated differences he has in mind between the two traditions (mata).[36] This appears to be the first mention of a distinction within the Tantric schools according to mata, "conviction" or "practice". The text assumes that both the term mata and the distinction made between kādi- and kālīmatas is well-known and offers no description of the differences. It is probable that kādimata is synonmous with Śrīkula, or even Śrīvidyā since it appears to refer directly to the mantra, and that kālīmata specifies the Kālīkula.

The term mata itself warrants a brief analysis since like other comparable terms for "conviction", "practice" or "tradition" it appears again in later Śrīvidyā sources. As it is appears here and in later sources, mata, is usually associated with the different forms of the Śrīvidyā mantra, especially when used with the terms kādi- and hādimatas.

But this purely mantra-based distinction does not restrict its use as a general term. Within Śrīvidyā mata is used in a more general sense to distinguish schools of thought or particular forms of worship. This evident in Jayaratha's explanation of Tantrāloka, 1.18 in which mata is used as a general specification for a doctrinal school.[37] The Sammohana Tantra, a work of special interest in Kashmiri traditions and quoted frequently by Śrīvidyā adepts as a general source of Tantric authority, uses mata combined with the names of deities such as Kubjikā, Piṅgalā and Nandikeśvara suggesting the patterns of worship associated with them.[38] But in the works of later Śrīvidyā adepts, such as Amṛtānanda or Bhāskararāya, the term is interchangable with a host of others including ācāra "practice", mārga "path", sampradāya "tradition" and krama "method".

We may conclude that it is not the term for doctrine or practice that is crucial for Tantrics but the specific, technical term with which it is compounded.[39] Lakṣmīdhara, for example, the leading exponent of the Samaya school of Śrīvidyā, frequently interchanges mata, ācāra and mārga with samaya. The crucial term here is obviously samaya, not the term for "conduct" or "school". To Lakṣmīdhara samaya is a way of life, the Samayamata or Samayācāra is "conduct according to samaya principles" which he differentiates from

the kulamata, or "conduct according to kula tradition".

The text of the Tantrarāja Tantra is divided into thirty-six chapters (probably intended to parallel creation in the thirty-six tattvas) and has enjoyed a widespread popularity; it is especially important to both Kashmiri and south Indian Śrīvidyā traditions. Its foremost commentary, entitled the Manorama, was written between 1603 and 1604 by Subhagānandanātha, yet another Kashmiri, though he apparently did not live to see its completion, the task having been taken up by his disciple Prakāśānandanātha.[40] The TT is cited by historical commentators with as much frequency and authority as the VT, probably because of its sophisticated explanations of ritual procedures and succinct, revealing esoteric interpretations. Abhinavagupta says that Tantrarāja presents a form of the secret worship presented in Kaula literature.[41] Bhāskararāya is more reserved and offers no direct comments on the text though he frequently cites it to support his interpretations. He only says that Tantrarāja is not a separate Tantra nor part of the "original" list of sixty-four. In the Setubandha he notes that the list of sixty-four Tantras given in the TT is obviously defective since it lists VT as a separate work from the Sundarīhrdaya, which is but another name for the Yoginīhṛdaya.[42]

Among contemporary adepts the TT is popular it would seem because of the availability of the text in print and its frequeny citation by Bhāskararāya. But the TT's ritual elaborations, especially regarding the sixteen nityās, do not seem to be practiced and appear more as theoretical embellishments than actual ritual guidelines as they were intended to be.

The Jñānārṇava Tantra (JT) is the third major Tantra focusing on Śrīvidyā and like the Tantrarāja it too states its preference for kādimata. It is cited by historical commentators frequently, especially by Brahmānanda and Pūrṇānanda, and according to Goudriaan its terminus ante quem is before the sixteenth century.[43] Despite its late emergence it has lost none of its authority among contemporary adepts. The Tantra contributes significantly to the interpretation of Śrīvidyā's symbolic triads and to the discussion of the mantric hierarchy.[44] This presentation has been extremely influential on modern south Indian adepts and several ritual handbooks (paddhatis) claim to be based on the authority of this Tantra.[45] The conspicuous absence of the five usually prohibited substances, the pañcamakāras, has not escaped the attention of those opposing their use; a fact used to support the claim that the makāras are not a part of the "original"

teachings of Śrīvidyā.

The *Śrīvidyārṇava Tantra* (*SVA*), despite its proclaimed human authorship and relatively recent sixteenth century date, has also enjoyed popularity among southern Śrīvidyā adepts.[46] The close connection between Śrīvidyā and the Śaṅkara tradition, which Vidyārṇava Yati the author has emphasized, is perhaps the most significant point raised in the text. The author follows the *TT* division into *Kādi*- and *Kālīmatas* but does not elaborate on the differences. Since the *Tantrarāja* is frequently quoted on other matters it is not unlikely that its positions are assumed in entirety. Curiously, the author also appears to have no aversion to Kaula sources which are cited as authorities despite significant divergences from the Śaṅkara tradition's values.[47] The *SVA*'s references to the *Rudrayāmala*, like other citations of this text, do not appear in printed editions and hence contribute to an understanding of what the "larger" *RY* includes. Printed editions of the *SVA* are rare and a lack of availablity has contributed to its decreasing importance in living traditions. The *SVA* has, however, left a mark on modern south Indian traditions as a comprehensive synthesis of Śrīvidyā ritual and theology.

These four Tantras, the *Vāmakeśvara*, *Tantrarāja*, *Jñānarṇava* and *Śrīvidyārṇava*, are the most frequently cited

and commented upon sources in contemporary south Indian Śrīvidyā tradition. Only the SVA appears to have had a limited regional appeal. Other Tantras of the Śrīkula, such as *Paramānanda Tantra* and *Ānandārṇava Tantra* have, in comparison, had only a minor impact on living tradition.

Śaktisaṃgama Tantra (*SST*), which dates no earlier than the sixteenth century, is noteworthy because it appears to have had an influence on subsequent historical commentators. Its *Sundarīkhaṇḍa* offers detailed examination of *srīcakra* worship and details the magical results of other rituals.[48] The Tantra's late date may account in part for the extraordinary variety of subjects it undertakes to explain; its author codifies mantric practices by region and subtradition.[49]

Perhaps it is also the *SST*'s late emergence that accounts for its emphasis on the regionalization of Tantric traditions according to the prevalence of the worship of certain particular aspects of the goddess. Tripurā is merely one of the goddesses whose worship is described in the Tantra. *SST*'s presentation of regional distinctions, does not appear to reflect the contemporary situation though neither is it groundless in light of modern south Indian accounts. It may, in fact, reflect the situation known to its compilers though the scheme as outlined is complex and

not altogether consistent.[50] By introducing the kādi/hādi distinction the author implies that each mata focused on a different aspect of Śakti, a fact unsupported in other sources. The basic regional distinction, however, is the one most commonly referred to in contemporary circles. It follows what SST calls Kāshmira, Gauḍa (i.e., Bengal) and Kerala lines of tradition. Some contemporary southern adepts when presented with the scheme point out that Śrīvidyā is not associated with the Kālī traditions of Kerala. According to SST the divisions follow region and the kādi/hādimata distinction:

	Kerala	Gauḍa	Kāshmira
Hādimata	Kālikā	Tārā	Tripurā
Kādimata	Tripurā	Kālī	Tarani

This scheme would agree with the general situation in modern Kerala insofar as Tripurā and Kālī forms of worship are historically important. But it does not seem to follow the mata distinction. There is, in fact, no living hādi-based tradition upon which we may judge the historical situation or the presentation in the Tantra. It is clear, given the limited available resources, that the regional traditions were thought be distinctive enough to warrant a formalization of their variations. What these variations entail is not evident in the SST's presentation but deserves a more careful analysis since contemporary adepts stress the

importance of regional influences on their history and practice.

Other Śrīkula Tantras than those mentioned here have all but disappeared from the traditions of living lineages in south India; the focus remains squarely on the practical ritual handbooks (nibandhas and paddhatis) that form the core of worship and spiritual practice.

1. Distinguishing Śrīvidyā sources from others would be undesirable if in the process an unwarranted degree of emphasis were placed on the differences rather than the continuities within the broader Śākta tradition and between Śrīvidyā and other Hindus in general. The tendency of its authors and sources is to be inclusive with regard to the breadth of theological possibilites while at the same time to make clear the distinctive elements that make their own interpretation superior.

2. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

3. Despite the fact that many contemporary adepts are known to one another by name or in reputation very few make any effort to meet or engage in dialogue. Contemporary lineages are self contained entities with little interest in the affairs or interpreations of others. Many adepts expressed interest in why I as an initiate should have such an interest. Many thought it a mere intellectual exercise that served no practical aim. The reasons for this are obvious if one reflects on the history of Tantrism and its transmission in tightly controlled lineages. Allegience to the tradition is interpreted almost exclusively as allegience to a particular guru and his teachings. That these teachings have common sources and a continuous history of development is only of minimal interest to adepts. As privately oriented Tantric traditions, Śrīvidyā lineages stay "within themselves" and rarely seek advice or even evince curiousity in like-minded individuals or groups.

4. Cf., HTSL, p.166f.

5. See Pandey, p.543ff. and HTSL, p.59ff.

6. The most reliable editions of the Vāmakeśvara Tantra divide the work into its two parts. See Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava(tantra), with two (Sanskrit) Commentaries, Ṛjuvimarśinī by Śivānanda and Artharatnāvali by Vidyānanda, edited by V.V. Dwiveda. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1968 (Yogatantragranthamālā, 1); also edited in Sanskrit by K.V. Abhyankar, with the commentary entitled Setubandha by Bhāskararāya. Poona: Ānandāśrama, 1908 (AnSS, 56). In addition, the NSA with Jayaratha's commentary is available as: Vāmakeśvarīmatam with the commentary of Rājanaka Jayaratha, edited by M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Government Press, 1945 (KSTS, LXVI). The Yoginīhṛdaya is available as: Yoginīhṛdaya with the commentaries Dīpikā of Amṛtānanda and Setubandha of Bhāskararāya, edited by Gopinath Kaviraj. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, 1979, second

edition, 1981, third edition, n.d. (Sarasvati-bhāvanāgranthamālā, 7). For a thorough discussion of the history of the text and a review of its contents see HTSL, p.59ff. including references to the NSA as the Catuḥsatī and the YH as Sundarīhṛdaya. Bhāskararāya in his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya also refers to YH as Nityāhṛdaya, see his remarks on v.1. NSA hereafter refers to the Dwiveda edition and YH to the Kaviraj, third edition unless otherwise specified (sometimes specified as "Dwiveda" or "Kaviraj"; all references to Jayaratha refer to the Sastri edition.

7. Cf., HTSL, pp.60-64.

8. HTSL, p.64.

9. See Padoux, A., Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de al parole dans certains textes tantriques. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1976 for a thorough discussion of the principles of Kashmiri Saivism and their relationship to other sources and traditions.

10. See Tantrarāja Tantra, edited by Lakṣmana Śāstri with an Introduction by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe). New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint edition, 1981, Chapter 36 and the remarks made by Avalon on p.2 and p.71.

11. See note 6 for details on the edition of the text.

12. Jayaratha on NSA 1.47; see also HTSL,p.60 and Pandey, p.578.

13. Pandey, p.578.

14. The two other Kashmiri commentaries, Artharatnāvali and Ṛjuvimarśinī both end at 5.33 and only Bhāskararāya who composed the Setubandha after having reached the south goes on to verse 44.

15. See Pandey, pp.580-581.

16. Maheśvarānanda is author of the Mahārthamañjarī; see Silburn, L., traduction et introduction, La Mahārthamañjarī de Maheśvarānanda avec des extraits du Parimala. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1968, p.9ff. For another opinion see the Mahārthamañjarī of Maheśvarānanda with the auto-commentary Parimala, edited with an Introdution in Sanskrit (upodghata) by V.V. Dwiveda. Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1972, p.kaff.

17. For more on Mahesvarānanda's role in Kashmiri tradition see Silburn as cited above.

18. See Dwiveda's Introduction to Mahārthamañjarī, p.5f.

19. Note that Dwiveda in his Introduction to NSA, p.21, maintains that the author of the Artharatnāvali is identical to the author of the Saubhāgyaratnākāra. This is not possible. Internal evidence to the contrary abounds in the Saubhāgyaratnākāra clearly demonstrating that the lineages of the two "Vidyānandas" are different. Unfortunately there is at present no available edition of the Saubhāgyaratnākāra in print though a recension from the Sarasvati Mahal Sanskrit Library in Thanjavur edited by Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy is forthcoming.

20. See M.K. Sastri's Introduction to Vāmakeśvarīmatam.

21. NSA, 1.123.

22. Pandey, p.553.

23. See Avalon's Introduction to TT, pp.35-36.

24. This is evident in Kashmiri Śaiva tradition especially. See HTLS, p.60ff.

25. HTSL, 60ff.

26. Note that to the ordinary fifteen visible phases of the moon is added one more, the "unseen" phase that is said to conceal Siva's true nature. On the sixteen nityās, tithis or kalās, as they are called, see HT, p.57 and p.60.

27. See HT, p.57. During śrīcakra pūjā the sixteen nityās are worshipped before the beginning of āvāraṇa worship. They are place on the central trikoṇa five to a side with the sixteenth identified on the bindu. For details see the section on the śrīcakra.

28. YH, 1.1.

29. YH, 1.2.

30. Though it is treated as a separate sub-school, the hādimata appears to be little more than a variant mantric interpretation rather than a fully elaborated theology. For more on this see the detailed discussion in the section on the śrīvidyā.

31. On Bhāskararāya's biography in history and legend see the Introdution in: Varivasyarahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin, edited and translated by S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, first edition 1934, fourth edition 1976.

32. These works of Amṛtānanda are contained in the Dwiveda edition of NSA.

33. According to some legends, for example, Tirumūlar was originally a Kashmiri who came to Tamil Nāḍu and brought with him Kashimiri influenced Śaivism. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts also note that traditions of classical dance (bhāratanāṭyam) written about by Kashmiri authors such as Abhinavagupta have flourished in south India. While seemingly coincidental these instances would suggest that perhaps an historical connection does exist linking Kashmiri and Tamil traditions. Certainly it is a subject worthy of more serious study.

34. "Naṭaraja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

35. See HTSL, p.64f. for an outline of text, p.64f. Note that Goudriaan's remark concerning the name of the text as "really" being the Kādimatatantra is perhaps an overstatement. Bhāskararāya, for example, frequently refers to the text as the Tantrarāja.

36. See TRT, 1.5. and also HTSL, p.64.

37. Cf., HTSL, p.18.

38. See HT, p.40.

39. Goudriaan seems to have placed to great an emphasis on the emergence of the term mata when instead he would better interpret the differences between groups by focusing on "other" term in the compound. Cf, HTSL, p.65, ftn.24.

40. HTSL, p.65.

41. Pandey, p.575.

42. NSA, 1.7; See also Pandey, p.574.

43. HTSL, p.67.

44. Cf., HTSL, p.68. Concerning the hierarchy of mantras, stated or implied, within Śrīvidyā tradition see the chapter on the Śrīvidyā.

45. Since these *paddhatis* circulate privately in handwritten forms among adepts it is impossible to provide a proper citation. It is the usual situation, however, that the *paddhati* states at its outset that it claims its authority through a specific line of teachers and sometimes through a specific text. I have seen at least three different *paddhatis* of distinct lineages which claim to be based on the *Jñānārṇava Tantra* and several based on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, which includes, of course, the *Nityotsava* of Umānanda.

46. Cf., *HTSL*, p.71f.

47. See *HTSL*, pp.71-72. Goudriaan notes also the author's citing of the *KT* and *RY* but curiously does not point out the inconsistency between the positions taken in these works and the author's allegiances to Śaṅkara tradition.

48. *HTSL*, p.70.

49. See *HT*, p.43; also *HTSL*, p.71. The *kādi/hādi* distinction is taken up under the Śrīvidyā mantra.

50. As Goudriaan points out in *HT*, p.43f.

Part One
Chapter Four
Śrīvidyā in Text and History: Independent Treatises and Commentarial Literature

A. Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara and the Śāṅkara Tradition

No historical figures' associations with Śrīvidyā are more curious or more important to the development of contemporary tradition in south India than those of Śaṅkarācārya and his teacher's teacher (paramaguru) Gauḍapāda. They are not only the earliest chronologically but their influences in text and reputation reach directly into the present.

Hacker and other scholars, however, have shown that the historical Śaṅkara was more likely to have been a Vaiṣṇava and that it is doubtful, if not totally impossible, to verify his authorship of any Śākta or Śaiva works.[1]

While historians may dismiss the traditional claim that Śaṅkara, author of the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya and Upadeśahasrī, also composed the Saundaryalaharī (SL), the Prapancasāra (PS) and Lalitātriśatībhāṣya (LTSB), an overwhelming majority of Śāktas as well as the contemporary purveyors of Śāṅkara tradition accept these works as authentic.[2] These four Śākta texts are seminal to the development of later Śrīvidyā, especially the Saundaryalaharī which has attracted at least thirty-four known commentaries.[3] They are perhaps the most frequently cited works (except LTSB) within

Śrīvidyā outside of the Tantras and Puṇyānanda's KKV.

The Prapañcasāra, strictly speaking, is an eloquent exposition of mantraśāstra and deals with various forms of the śrīvidyā in the course of its presentation.[4] Its mention of Śrīvidyā's twelve traditional teachers and twelve respective forms of the mūlamantra suggests that the tradition had gone through most of its elaborate theoretical expansion by the time of its composition.[5] The work is of high literary quality, like all the Śākta works attributed to Śaṅkara, and can be dated to no later than the eleventh century and possibly much earlier.[6] It is cited frequently by Sivananda in his Ṛjuvimarśinī as well as in the Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati.[7] A Vivaraṇa commentary, attributed to Śaṅkara's immediate disciple Padmapāda, is complimented by a number of other elucidations several of which are of south Indian origin but none matching Padmapāda's in popularity.[8] Particularly noteworthy is the professed allegiance of the Vivaraṇa's author to hādimata though he says little that illuminates differences with kādimata. The suggestion that the Śaṅkara tradition follows the hādimata because "Padmapāda" takes this position is not maintained in contemporary traditions. The attribution of this work to a direct disciple of Śaṅkara is, however, an indication of the intention of those involved in its composition to view its transmission as part of a continuous

tradition.

Bhāskararāya refers frequently to the PS to support his mantric interpretations and it is clear that he, like virtually all post-twelfth century authors, do not dispute Śaṅkara's purported authorship or that of the Vivaraṇa.[9] He refers to Śaṅkara frequently as "Sri Bhāgavatpāda", a common epithet for all the heads of the Śāṅkara maṭhas, but there is no doubt that he has the historical Ādiśaṅkara in mind.[10] The author of PS, however, by tacitly accepting the theories of śabdabrahman could not be the author of the Brahmansūtrabhāṣya who rejects this position.[11]

Regarding the exposition of Śrīvidyā, PS mentions the śrīvidyā in only a slightly more elaborate manner than later mantraśāstras such as the Mantramahodadhi (MM) which make only a cursory mention.[12] In a way comparable to the later Śāradātilaka (ST), also cited by Śrīvidyā authors such as Amṛtānanda and Bhāskararāya as an authority on mantraśāstra, the Prapañcasāra's foremost concerns are the power of mantras to influence and effect change in the natural and social universe and to describe the mantric worship of deities.[13] It is only to this limited extent that the PS is part of Śrīvidyā literature. Because Śrīvidyā adepts have traditionally gained a reputation for general mantric knowledge, sources such as the PS, ST and MM play an

important role in the development of the broader spiritual discipline rather than as sources of Śrīvidyā doctrine or ritual.

The Lalitātriśatīstotra and the commentary (bhāṣya) attributed to Śaṅkara (cited here as LTSB), however, bear directly on Śrīvidyā. The "Hymn of the Three Hundred [Names] of Lalitā", part of the Lalitopakhyāna within the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, is attributed to Śiva and Śakti who transmit it to guru Hayagrīva, who then gives it to his disciple, the sage Agastya.[14] This familiar scenario parallels the myth concerning the better known Lalitāsahasranāma (LSN). Lalitā and Śiva, in the form of Kāmeśvara, appear to Hayagrīva who relates to them the good fortune of having a disciple such as Agastya. It is Agastya's devotion to the guru and to Śakti which Hayagrīva maintains is the reason for this blessed vision. Hayagrīva then tells Agastya that Lalitā's three hundred names are not merely names to be praised but powerful mantras; they should be kept secret because they conceal the fifteen syllable form of the śrīvidyā.[15]

The text itself follows Hayagrīva's description: three hundred individual names divided into groups of twenty each beginning with a consecutive letter of the fifteen syllable śrīvidyā in the kādimata form. It is also clear that the author was aware of the kādi/hādi distinction since

hādividyā is one of the names attributed to Śakti. The text, however, is structured not only to follow the kādi configuration of the mantra but according to the fifteen rather than sixteen syllable form of the mantra. This fact has not gone unnoticed by contemporary adepts favoring kādi and the pañcadaśī mantra:

> The Lalitātriśatī shows that not only is the kādi the superior form of śrīvidyā but that the pañcadaśī is the original form of the mantra. In our opinion this must be true because there is so much dispute over the ṣoḍaśī.[16]

There is substantial internal evidence within the LTSB to indicate that it must come from a period later than the eighth century Śaṅkara. An important indication is the emphasis the text lays on the ānanda or blissful aspect of Brahman identified with the realization of the goddess's ultimate nature.[17] This point, equally stressed in the commentary, is inconsistent with the views of Śaṅkara the Brahmasūtrabhāṣyakāra. But more substantive contravening evidence is the explicit mention of certain types of lakṣaṇa or metaphor used to interpret the Vedic utterances. Hacker and others, show that this does not agree with the interpretations of Brahmasūtrabhāṣyakāra.[18]

The most likely possibility seems to be that the LTSB was composed in one of the Śaṅkara maṭhas sometime between the eighth and eleventh centuries. The LTS itself has not

enjoyed the same degree of popularity as the Lalitāsahasranāma and were it not for the attributed Śaṅkara commentary it may have faded into obscurity. There are, in fact, a remarkable dearth of references to it in Śrīvidya literature and it seems particularly important that it has been completely passed over by the northern, especially Kashmiri, commentators such as Amṛtānanda. Given the usefulness of the text for elucidating Śrīvidyā's general theology and especially the mantra this omission suggests that it was either unknown to these medieval northern figures or was not part of their regional literature. Since we can be quite sure that the text and commentary both existed by Amṛtānanda's time we may conclude that it is likely not to have been part of Kashmiri teachings if it was known to him by name or even in content. In south India, however, the text has a popular history and is one of the primary links between Śaṅkara tradition and Śrīvidya. Contemporary adepts also linking themselves to one of the Śaṅkara tradition's seats (pīṭhas) maintain that the LTSB is not frequently referred to by historical commentators because it is a more secret form of Śrīvidyā teaching than other stotras including LSN. As one adept put it:

> The [Śrīvidyā] mantra is taught in a hierarchy. At the top is the mantra itself; next comes the teaching of it in Lalitātriśatī where it is still in an explicit form as the first letter of the [various groups of] names. The mantra is also present at another level in the

> Lalitāsahasranāma and here it is kept out of the open so that this stotra can be used by any devotee. Lalitātriśatī is a higher form of qualification (adhikāra) and hence is not as common since it is taught more selectively. The names in the Triśatī are simply less powerful, less condensed forms of the mantra itself, where as in the sahasranāma the mantra is fully concealed to protect the ordinary devotee. For the adept (upāsaka), however, even the sahasranāma is a source of mantric power because he knows its secrets. Triśatī is a very popular text in the south because Śaṅkara wrote it in Kāñcipuram near the end of his days after all his philosophical work was complete.[19]

Southern Śrīvidyā adepts who dispute Śaṅkara's authorship of LTSB and do not associate Śrīvidyā with his traditions do not necessarily reject the importance of the LTS itself. One adept of this group explained:

> We do not believe Śaṅkara wrote this commentary on Triśatī but the text itself is very useful. It is more of a mantraśāstra than a stotra and this is why it is not as popular as the sahasranāma.[20]

The third Sakta source attributed to Sankara is popular in all Śākta traditions (Tantric or otherwise) and across Śrīvidyā's regional distinctions. Saundaryalaharī (SL) has attracted the attention of not only traditional Indian scholars crossing sectarian boundaries but western scholars interested in its poetic and religious value. Norman Brown's fine study and translation notwithstanding, much important scholarship concerning this text is yet to be

accomplished. While Brown correctly dismisses the attribution to Śaṅkara and observes the inadequacy of the commentarial literature for elucidating the literary meaning of the text, he does not consider the significance of Śaṅkara's purported authorship for subsequent theological traditions or give any indication of the important role the commentaries play in later Śaiva-Śākta traditions. While these matters are of little interest to him, they are at the center of our concerns.

There are traditionally purported to be thirty-six commentaries on SL of which nine have been edited and printed. Of these two stand out for their literary merit and illuminative power.[21] The most important and likely the earliest chronologically is Lakṣmīdhara's Lakṣmīdharī which is dated confidently to the sixteenth century. The author was patronized in the court of the Orissan King Pratāpatarudra Gajapati (1497-1539).[22] The commentary itself is significant if only because Lakṣmīdhara is the foremost exponent of Śrīvidyā's Samaya school and his SL commentary remains one of its sole interpretive sources.[23] Though Lakṣmīdhara is also credited with a ritual handbook for the worship of Śiva, entitled Śaivakalpadruma, it is clear from the SL commentary that t[illegible] author's personal devotional focus is Śakti.[24] His foremost concern is to distinguish the Samaya from the Kaula tradition by drawing a

sharp sectarian distinction within Śrīvidyā.

Lakṣmīdhara's sectarianism has not precluded his becoming an authoritative source even for those who do not share his views.[25] While Lakṣmīdhara stands alone on many interpretive issues without textual or historical support, his rendering of the SL's esoteric meaning has become the standard for nearly all later efforts.[26]

Lakṣmīdhara fails to mention the prayogas popularly associated with the SL's verses. These ritual directions, employing individual verses of the text for obtaining specific ends, are explained in some detail in the study of living traditions. Their association with the SL in recent times is so pronounced that their omission in all the edited commentaries is especially puzzling. It would appear that (1) the prayogas were not known to the historical commentators, (2) did not figure prominently into their interpretations of the text or, as it is more likely, (3) are of recent origin.

Kaivalyāsrama, whose Saubhāgyavardhanī is the only major commentary which does not cite Lakṣmīdhara, provides no biographical data and the circumstances of his life and work remain a mystery.[27] Contemporary adepts frequently cite him to substantiate their own views, regarding his opinions highly but offering no biographical or historical information. His popularity is restricted it would appear

to southern India and manuscripts of the Saubhāgyavardhanī are limited to southern libraries. But these facts alone do not lead to the conclusion that Kaivalyāśrama was necessarily a southerner. At best there is evidence of his limited regional popularity and the possibility that he is from southern India.

Of the other edited commentaries, three bear on the present study. Rāmakavi's Ḍiṇḍima is noteworthy for its effort to reconcile Tantric views of the tattvas with those of the Sāṅkhya school. The author identifies Śakti and Siva with Sāṅkhya's prakṛti and puruṣa and lists the Śākta's thirty-six categories (tattvas) without offering an explanation of how the eleven "extra" tattvas in Tantric interpretations are added to Yoga's twenty-five or twelve to Sāṅkhya's twenty-four.[28] Rāmakavi also tells us that he is a native of Kāñcideśa, that is, Kāñcipuram in Tamil Nāḍu but gives no clues concerning his date. He is, however, mentioned in the Aruṇāmodinī of Kāmeśvarasūri and it is certain only that he lived after Lakṣmīdhara.

The Gopālasundarī of Nṛsimhaswāmi is unique among the published commentaries inasmuch as it interprets the text from the Vaiṣṇava perspective. Śakti is called Gauri, the goddess who emanated along with Viṣṇu from the single source called Mahāsarasvatī. Throughout the work, however, the goddess is theologically subordinate to Viṣṇu and considered

his consort. This commentary is important to a very small number of contemporary adepts born into Vaiṣṇava families and yet practicing Śrīvidyā. One such adept said that the presence of this commentary confirmed in his own mind that Śrīvidyā is not in and of itself a "sectarian tradition, but rather one that can be interpreted from either Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava perspectives."[29]

The author of the Sudhavidyodinī, a commentary of unknown date and origin, is significant for his claim that the SL was authored by none other than his own father, Pravarasena. This deviates from the otherwise univocal opinion that the entire text or at least the final fifty-one verses are from the hand of Śaṅkara (c.750 C.E.).

According to popular legend, Śaṅkara is responsible for gathering the first forty-one verses, the so-called Ānandalaharī, from Mount Kailāsa. In one version of the myth, he had learned all one hundred from Siva himself but in a mishap involving Nandikeśvara he was able to retrieve only the forty-one of the Ānandalaharī; to these he added the rest and gave the name Saundaryalaharī. In another version preserved in Tamil Nāḍu it is said that the whole text was inscribed by Śiva on the walls of his cave on Mt. Kailāsa though his claim to authorship was disputed by Sārāsvatī. In still another version, a heavenly being (in some cases a yakṣa named Puṣpadanta) heard them sung by Śiva

and inscribed them atop Mount Meru. These were retrieved by Gauḍapāda, passed to Śaṅkara's teacher Govinda and finally written down by Śaṅkara himself. The text of the Ānandalaharī portion of the text is also found as an inscription on the wall of the temple to Sugandhikuntālamba within the sub-temple of Matṛubhuteśvara at the Rock Fort complex in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nāḍu. Local tradition claims the inscription to have been made by Śaṅkara himself, written as he travelled through the city on the way to Rāmesvaram; he then completed the final fifty-nine verses before the image of the goddess Akhilandeśvarī in Tiruvaṇaikōil (near Tiruchirapalli). This southern tradition is still maintained in the Śaṅkara maṭha in Kañcipuram.

The historical account of the SL's authorship, like all literary issues, is handled deftly by Brown.[30] There is no doubt, however, that the living traditions within the Śaṅkara maṭhas and most Śrīvidyā lineages maintain at least the core of the oral mythology: the Ānandalaharī was transmitted through Śaṅkara who received it from Śiva (or Śakti) while only the final fifty-nine verses are Śaṅkara's creation. South Indian traditions differ regarding the location of the text's composition but only those Śrīvidyā lineages deliberately severing themselves from the Śaṅkara tradition dispute its authorship.

The attribution of these four works to Sankara solidifies connections between orthodox elements of Hindu society, especially smārta Brahmins identifying with one of the southern Śaṅkara pīṭhas, and Śākta and Śrīvidyā traditionalists. As we have noted, there is evidence to support the possibility of Śrīvidyā elements of worship in established, orthodox circles from as early as the sixth century. By the time these works were composed, sometime after the eighth century, we can suppose that Brahmin dominated traditions, such as those in the Śaṅkara maṭhas, were fully conversant with Śākta practices, including those elements they would have opposed such as the pañcamakāras. The most acceptable method of interpretation of text and tradition was to assimilate acceptable elements and leave aside controversial topics.

The inconsistencies between the SL and other Tantric sources, however, are more difficult to explain. The cautious scholar is inclined to agree with Brown who believes that the absence of specific Tantric vocabulary within the poem points to no approximate correspondence between the SL and other Tantric sources.[31] But this opinion stands in such glaring opposition to both oral and post-tenth century historical traditions that it is difficult to accept the learned professor's theory. Given the late date of the text's composition it does not seem

likely that SL represents an early historical phase of Tantric theory but rather a refinement suited to the needs of a very specialized group. The text appears to accommodate and omit Tantric concepts to suit conservative, Brahmanically influenced Śāktism. For example, the inconsistencies between the SL's theory of bodily cakras and the usual Tantric explanation might in part reflect this effort to accommodate Tantric theories generally and yet separate itself from unacceptable specifics. Like Brown's theory, this is only another attempt to explain the difficulties involved in the composition and subsequent history of this work. Another explanation of SL's content is given by contemporary adepts:

> Saundaryalaharī is a poem extolling the praises of Devī and giving some of the details of Śrīvidyā without going into the intricacies of the pūjā or the theory. This is why it lacks the sort of technical descriptions you see in other texts such as Vāmakeśvara Tantra. We must remember that this is a stotra, not a Tantra, it was meant to be read with secret and special teachings included only in the oral tradition. Lakṣmīdhara provides many of these details. Those who view the text from the purely literary point of view will not be able to appreciate these hidden and unstated matters. In fact, we can say that those who reject that these secret or implicit teachings are actually in the text, have been led purposefully to this conclusion by Śaṅkara. He wished to protect the uninitiated and leave the text open to all. He accomplished this by leaving out all the technicalities and instead using the secret and suggestive method of teaching. Those who think it is just a poem praising Devī and not an exposition of Śrīvidyā have seen only the surfaces, they appreciate merely the waves of beauty (saundaryalaharī) but not the ocean of meaning.[32]

Lakṣmīdhara chooses SL to define Samayācāra and distinguish it from Kaulācāra because it completely omits any mention of even remotely objectionable Kaula elements, such as kāmakalādhyāna. The text, like all others attributed to Śaṅkara or Gauḍapāda, is thus acceptable to even the most conservative Hindus but lacks the distinctive Kaula Tantric marks common to most Śrīvidyā literature. Were it not for the attention given to the śrīcakra and the extensive commentarial literature, the SL would not be of particular interest to the scholar studying the intricacies of Śākta Tantrism. There is, however, perhaps no text with as much universal appeal to all religious factions within Śrīvidyā tradition as the SL---from the most conservative Brahmins and Samayins to the most socially antinomian Kaulikas.

Along the same traditional lines two Śrīvidyā works are attributed to Śaṅkara's paramaguru Gauḍapāda. If the Subhagodaya and the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras could be proven authentic works of Gauḍapāda they would be the earliest independent treatises in Śākta Tantrism. Unfortunately there is no reason to believe this is the case. To add to the difficulty there has been confusion regarding the Subhagodaya, which is sometimes attributed to Śivānanda and other times to Gauḍapāda.33 There exist, however, at least two different texts under this title, the common version

attributed to Śivānanda (appearing in Dwiveda's edition of the NSA) and sometimes attributed to Gauḍapāda and yet another which is attributed to Gauḍapāda alone.[34] This apparently resolves the dilemma since none of the manuscripts the text attributed to Śivānanda that I reviewed were attributed to Gauḍapāda; I was, however, unable to find any copies of the Gauḍapāda Subhagodaya other than the manuscript versions in Madras.

The text solely attributed to Gauḍapāda describes the goddess's ability to confer various forms of empowerment (aiśvarya) on those who worship her mantra and yantra and thus explains the many ways she is considered propitious (saubhāgya). Like the other sources within the Śāṅkara tradition it eschews mention of the pañcamakāras and is considered by the handful of contemporary Samaya adepts familiar with it as an example of the "original" Śrīvidya tradition.

The Śrīvidyāratnasūtras, also attributed to Gauḍapāda, are better known to contemporary adepts than the Subhagodaya.[35] The text focuses on an exposition of the śrīvidyā in its kādi and hādi forms and emphasizes the absolute identity of the deity, guru and mantra. In contemporary south India it is most frequently read with a commentary (entitled Dīpikā) attributed to one Śaṅkarāraṇya, a disciple of Vidyāraṇyamuni. This is due primarily to its

availability in the common printed edition. Manuscripts of the text are preserved in the Śaṅkara maṭhas at Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgerī; the Śaṅkara tradition as well as the majority of living Śrīvidyā adepts accept Gauḍapāda's authorship without dispute.

Neither internal literary evidence nor historical records give an indication of the date of the text and while it does not seem plausible to accept that Gauḍapāda (c.600?), the author of at least substantial portions of the Māṇḍukhyopaniṣadkārikās, could possibly have written either Subhagodaya or the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras, his role in Śrīvidyā tradition is well established. While both texts are referred to in later works without regard to Kaula/Samaya sectarian distinctions (notably by Bhāskararāya and his Kaulācāra disciples, Umānanda and Rāmeśvara) they are particularly important for Samaya and other Śrīvidyā lineages linking themselves with the historical Śaṅkara and the Śaṅkara tradition. As one follower of a Śaṅkarite Śrīvidyā lineage said:

> There is nothing offensive about the Śrīvidyā works of Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda. You will find no mention of the makāras and other unacceptable behavior. We accept them as fully authentic since it is our tradition that Śaṅkara was a great devotee of Devī. If he were not devoted to Śakti he could not have attained such fame.[36]

Whatever seemingly conclusive chronological or literary

evidence the historian unearths disputing Śaṅkarācārya or Gauḍapāda as Śāktas, the pious Śrīvidyā adept disputes. These works and concepts <u>should</u> belong to these figures, the Śākta argues, not only because they reflect the high literary standards associated with other work attributed to them but because they reflect a deeper, more esoteric aspect of their spiritual personalities. Since tradition asserts the authorship of these works, this fact alone might suffice to justify the Śākta's position. But a more theological reason underlies the position: viewed as pillars of conservative orthodoxy, Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda bring a legitimacy to Śrīvidyā that sublates other "offensive" aspects of Śākta textual and historical traditions. As Śrīvidyā developed in its incipient literary stages within these conservative circles it became evident that Kaula-influenced works were not wholly acceptable. The tradition itself was obviously vindicated of any "misconduct" when stalwart Brahmanical sources justified and interpreted its practices within acceptable theological and ethical parameters. Precisely how and why the Śaṅkara traditions adopted Śāktism remains unknown, that they <u>did</u> is the crucial fact for post-eleventh century Śaṅkarites.

B. **Ritual Sourcebooks, Treatises and Later Tradition**

All primary works mentioned thus far are likely to have been composed before 1200 C.E. But it is in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that Śrīvidyā undergoes its most prodigious growth. During this period authors elaborate upon the speculative concepts and ritual practices set forth in the Tantras. It is during this period, for example, that the Kashmiris Śivānanda and Amṛtānanda compose their Tantra commentaries and independent treatises, and Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa his extensive ritual compilations.[37]

Amṛtānanda's teacher Puṇyānandanātha is best known for his treatise, the Kāmakalāvilāsa (KKV), which enjoys tremendous popularity in contemporary India, particularly in the south.[38] The text has been frequently translated into European and Indian vernacular languages including Tamil; these include commentaries by recent adepts.[39] It is perhaps the best known independent treatise in Śrīvidyā tradition before Bhāskararāya.

The KKV expounds the concept of kāmakalā, the "aspect of desire", as both a theoretical component in Śākta cosmogony and a controversial form of meditation involving erotic elements. The text focuses, however, on the multifaceted relationships between the śrīcakra, the śrīvidyā, the deity and the adept in the creative process. It adopts a standard position within Śrīvidyā theology:

liberation entails a complete knowledge of creative devolution of the One in Many in the form of the śricakra. Gaining this theoretical knowledge and the ritual techniques necessary to experience it in effect reverses the devolutionary process and leads the adept back to the original creative source. The text itself contains no language or imagery objectionable to conservative Śrīvidyā adepts; its intellectual approach to the kāmakalā concept is particularly appealing in light of Bhāskararaya's literal interpretations of these ritual practices as involving the worship of the female organ.

Puṇyānanda's origins are unknown. Bharati claims he is "a renowned Bengali tantric" while contemporary adepts maintain that he, along with Sivānanda and Amṛtānanda, are originally Keralites who migrated to Kashmir.[40] There is, of course, a strong tendency in contemporary south India to consider Puṇyānanda a native son; the rather conservative and intellectual approach of his work coupled with its aesthetic appeal make him a fine candidate for this sort of adoption. His professed allegiance to the hādimata has not deterred contemporary kādimata followers from accepting the KKV's cosmological presentation as authoritative. It is also likely that Puṇyānanda had religious interests other than Śrīvidyā and that his expertise extended beyond the narrow scope of this rather technical, sectarian treatise.

He has, in addition, a complete familiarity with Kashmiri Śaivism evidenced by his facility with its technical terminology.

Some verses from Amṛtānanda's independent treatises, the Saubhāgyasudhodaya and the Cidvilāsastava, may in fact be Puṇyānanda's words. At the very least it is certain that his influence was strongly felt by Amṛtānanda who acknowledges his own authorship but who, in some manuscript colophons, praises his teacher as a direct inspiration. Amṛtānanda's independent works are receiving increasing attention from contemporary southern adepts since they have come into print.[41] Like the KKV they are essentially speculative rather than ritualistic inasmuch as the primary subjects are cosmology, the śrīcakra and theoretical devolution of sound from its source in śabdabrahman. Amṛtānanda's work, it would appear, has only recently begun to have an impact upon modern interpretations of Śrīvidyā in south India. These two independent works in particular have had a relatively limited exposure since they are known primarily through Bhāskararāya's references.

The Subhagodaya of Śivānanda, however, combines both speculative and ritual elements and for this reason retains an important place in contemporary interpretations. The vast majority of the text is given over to ritual prescriptions in the manner of a nibandha or paddhati while

the extensive gloss, entitled Subhagodayavāsana, provides the theoretical basis for the interpretation of the deities of the śrīcakra. Portions of both texts are quoted by later influential figures such as Maheśvarānanda in the Parimala autocommentary to his Mahārthamañjarī (MAM), Amṛtānanda in his Dīpikā on the YH and by Naṭānandanātha the author of the Cidvallī, the frequently quoted gloss on the KKV. References in the Ṛjuvimarśinī confirm Śivānanda's authorship of these two works but give no further clues as to his dates or other biographical information. Following Silburn's placing of Maheśvarānanda in the twelfth century, Śivānanda would naturally be considered much earlier since he is repeatedly referred to as the paramaguru.[42] The question remains open, however, as Dwiveda maintains a later date for Maheśvara and thus places Śivānanda in this 13th-14th century period of high literary activity.[43]

While Maheśvara's MAM is not, strictly speaking, a work concerning Śrīvidyā it has nonetheless exercised a profound influence on Śrīvidyā thinkers. It is frequently quoted by contemporary adepts who link themselves to its Kashmiri Śaiva views concerning the stages of sound and the relationship of Śiva and Śakti as the creators of the universe. Potentially more important would be Maheśvara's commentary on the Paramānanda Tantra entitled Saubhāgyānandasamdoha which has not been recovered and is

known to contemporary southern adepts only by name. From the title of this work, its connection to a minor Śrīkula Tantra and from Maheśvara's relationship to Śivānanda it is safe to assume that the author was initiated into Śrīvidyā. As it is the case with many of the Kashmiris, including such figures as Jayaratha, Maheśvara was not preoccupied with Śrīvidyā in his writings. His own commitment to the tradition, however, if measured solely against his attention to other subjects may be misleading. If contemporary tradition reflects the historical situation it is possible that the author wrote on many subjects and may not have chosen to write on the subject of his personal commitment. One contemporary adept with whom I had contact, for example, is a committed practitioner and teacher of Śrīvidyā and yet has spent his entire career writing on other subjects, especially on Saiva Siddhānta theology. We cannot necessarily assume that historical authors, such as Maheśvara or Jayaratha, whose written works focus on subjects other than Śrīvidyā are not initiates or are not, in the very least, authorities on Śrīvidyā when historical connections (or interpretations) suggest a strong relationship to the tradition. What seems likely with Maheśvara, as with Jayaratha, is that Śrīvidyā played a central but not an exclusive role in their religious lives. As Śaivas their acceptance and interpretation of Śrīvidya

principles affirms its significance in the broader spectrum of Kaula theology encompassing Śaiva and Śākta Tantric traditions. Thus a Śrīvidyā adept versed in the tradition and initiated into its practices can also have other religious commitments or express interest in other subjects and yet does not view these as interfering or inhibiting a commitment to Śrīvidyā.

Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa, better known in contemporary circles by his initiated name Vidyānandanātha (or more frequently in the texts as Śrīvidyānandanātha), leaves no doubt as to his commitment to Śrīvidyā despite the strong possibility of his having written the Śaiva ritual compendium entitled Śivārcanacandrikā.[44] His immense Saubhāgyaratnākara (SRK) is perhaps the most extensive of the ritual compilations devoted to Śrīvidyā and the śrīcakra pūjā.[45] His spiritual lineage further confirms his commitment to Śrīvidyā worship since his teacher, Sundarācārya, a Kashmiri from Jālandhara, composed the voluminous Lalitārcanacandrikā (LAC) under the initiated name Saccidānandanātha. He did so, it is said, in order to dispel the doubts of his students.[46] The LAC is certainly one of the most important of the early paddhatis devoted to śrīcakra worship especially if it precedes the authoritative Paraśurāmakalpasūtra (PKS). Its descriptions follow the familiar patterns of Śākta ritual taken up with

more scrutiny by Srīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa in the SRK. The colophons of the LAC trace Śrīnivāsa's lineage back yet another generation to the paramaguru, Svayamprahāsānandanātha who, according to contemporary oral tradition, was also a renowned Śrīvidyā adept of his day. The dīkṣānāma ending with -ānandanātha provides at least superficial historical evidence in support of his being an initiate.

Like the Vidyānanda of the Artharatnāvali, Śrīnivasa is dated to the late twelfth century.[47] His detailed exposition of Śrīvidyā ritual, however, would seem to indicate a somewhat later date. There are no other comparable ritual materials available from this period and placing him in the twelfth century date has an obvious affect on the date of his teacher and lineage. It is nonetheless likely that Śrīvidyā traditionalists elaborated and systematized to this degree by the twelfth century especially in light of the extensive codification present in Tantras dating from at least the ninth century.

The influence of the SRK on the thought of Bhāskararāya and later Śrīvidyā adepts is significant. Bhāskararāya's frequent citations give the text an air of authority comparable to the PKS and the work's lasting effects work are seen on several of the living lineages in south India including some not tracing themselves directly to Bhāskararāya. The importance of the SRK is evident in that

a knowledge of its contents is widespread in south India despite its being unpublished. Several contemporary adepts attributed this to a belief that Śrīnivāsa must have been a southerner despite his teacher's Kashmiri origins. Having been a native son or at least settled in the south would suggest his having left a spiritual legacy with an enduring influence even if the paramparas have vanished. Adepts cite Śivānanda as an analogous example of the connections between Kashmiri and southern traditions.

The preeminent place for ritual textbooks of Śrīvidya worship is reserved for the Paraśurāmakalpasūtra.[48] Contemporary southern adepts point to the attribution of the text to the figure of Paraśurāma as evidence of its southern origins.[49] Goudriaan's belief that the text is not much older than the sixteenth century remains unproven while several verses are quoted without recognition of their source in the Artharatnāvalī.[50] The PKS's immense popularity in contemporary south India is coupled to its being of undisputed divine origins. The long chapters on initiation and the worship of Gaṇeśa have become standard references for contemporary practice.

The PKS is undoubtedly a Kaula text given its inclusion of the makāras and elaborate description of kāmakalādhyāna but it is considered authoritative even by conservative Śrīvidyā interpreters who read it selectively.[51] Though

there is no internal evidence to suggest that it is related to the Tripurā Upaniṣad, Bhāskararāya has made it clear in his commentary on the Upaniṣad that "what is not found in one is found in the other".[52]

Rāmeśvara Sūri's nineteenth century commentary, the Saubhagyodaya, printed in the popular edition, offers a critical treatment of the text but is better known for its virulent opposition to the ritual systematization presented by Bhāskararāya's direct disciple Umānandanātha. Rāmeśvara was a south Indian Śrīvidyā initiate claiming a direct descent from Bhāskararāya through an unnamed disciple. His name curiously does not appear in any of the lineages of contemporary adepts, the majority of whom trace themselves to Bhāskararāya through Umānandanātha. His popularity among contemporary adepts arises only from his inclusion in the available printed edition.

Rāmeśvara disputes the established tradition that Bhāskararāya revised and approved Umānanda's paddhati on the grounds that it is utterly inconsistent with the Bhāskararāya's teachings. Not a point, it should be noted, lacking substance. As a result, Rāmeśvara doubts Umānanda was actually a disciple of Bhāskararāya though he offers no clues as to how this "misconception" was perpetuated. Rāmeśvara's own ideas seem dependent on Bhāskararāya and his frequently identical citations indicate a special reliance

on the Setubandha.[53]

Umānandanātha's paddhati, the Nityotsava, composed in 1775 C.E. enjoys nearly the same degree of popularity among contemporary adepts as the PKS though it lacks its divine authority.[54] Several contemporary paddhatis "base" their presentation on the Nityotsava but none appear to use the original as a literal source of liturgy. Its divergence from Bhāskararāya is usually "explained away" by contemporary adepts claiming inheritance through Umānanda. In one instance Umānanda's reference to the vṛttatraya as three circles surrounding the two sets of lotus petals of the śrīcakra---an interpretation Bhāskararāya does not accept---is interpreted as actually following Bhāskararāya's hidden intentions.[55]

Umānandanātha, like Bhāskararāya himself, is a Mahārāṣṭra Brahmin. His given name was Jagannātha Pāṇḍita and while some traditionalists claim him to be identical to the great logician of the same name this cannot be the case.[56] In addition to the NS, he is also known for his biography of Bhāskararāya, the Bhāskaravilāsa.[57] The biography's exaggerated claims, including a long list of attributed but unrecovered works, unfortunately make it an unreliable historical document.[58] Umānanda's recently recovered Hṛdayāmṛta, however, is a poem of outstanding merit even if only of marginal importance as a contribution

to Śrīvidyā theology.[59] The limited circulation of the published edition of this text has not brought it the notoriety among contemporary adepts it would otherwise doubtless achieve.

The dilemma of the attribution of sources to historical authors finds no better example than Bhāskararāya. This middle eighteenth century adept is unquestionably the dominant figure in contemporary Śrīvidyā tradition throughout India and yet the facts concerning his life are shrouded in the mythology of his spiritual accomplishments and culled almost entirely from Umānanda's pious biographical sketch. Like Śivānanda and other major historical figures in Śrīvidyā, Bhāskararāya was born in the south in the Vijayanāgara kingdom but received the bulk of his education in Benares. His father, Gambhīrānanda, a Ṛg Vedic Brahmin of the Viśvamitra gotra, was himself a well-known scholar of the Mahābhārata and it was he who placed Bhāskararāya under the tuition of Narasimhadhvarin so that he might learn the eighteen traditional sciences.[60] During his sojourn in Benares Bhāskararāya distinguished himself as a master of Vedic ritual and took full initiation (pūrṇābhiṣeka) into Śrīvidyā under the guru Śivadatta Śukla. Settling first on the banks of the Kṛṣṇa river at the request of his disciple Candrasena and later in the tiny hamlet of Tiruvalaṇkāḍu in modern Tañjhavur district, Tamil

Nāḍu, Bhāskararāya was gifted a village by the Maratha king Seforji sometime after 1756 C.E. The village on the opposite bank of the Kaveri river from Tiruvaḻaṇkāḍu was named (or renamed) after him, Bhāskararājapuram. The fate of this gifted property and the results of his long years of teaching are reviewed in the later discussion of the living tradition and in the introduction to the translation of his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya in Appendix One.

In addition to the Setubanda commentary on the Vāmakeśvara Tantra (completed in 1733 or 1741 C.E.), Bhāskararāya's major contributions to Śrīvidyā are his Saubhāgyabhāskara commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma (completed 1728), his three commentaries on sectarian Sakta Upaniṣads, viz., the Bhāvanā, Tripurā and Kaula Upaniṣads, and his short, but extremely influential independent treatise, the Varivasyarahasya, or "Secret of Worship".[61] Each of these works is a major interpretive source for contemporary Śrīvidyā tradition in south India; their influence on the historical development of the tradition in the past one hundred years is comparable only to the VT.

Bhāskararāya's works elaborate Śrīvidyā according to the vāmācāra Kaula tradition more comprehensively than any previous Śrīvidyā traditionalist. Tolerant of others and self-disciplined in his approach, he chooses to focus on texts and issues rather than become embroiled in theoretical

or sectarian disputes. It would seem, for example, impossible that he was unaware of Lakṣmīdhara's interpretation of Samayācāra and yet rather than attack this position he concentrates on the Tantras to establish the authoritativeness of Kaulism. In effect, he ignores the sectarian dispute as Lakṣmīdhara has defined it and proffers what he terms the superior interpretation. This "self-sufficient" interpretive style in which other views are considered strictly secondary to the individual lineage's exposition is characteristic of the majority of Śrīvidyā's historical commentators. Bhāskararāya's disinterest is perhaps more noteworthy because of his encyclopedic and detailed approach to the subject.

Neither arrogant nor condescending, Bhāskararāya rather exemplifies the role of secrecy within his tradition, an aspect of faith imbedded in Srīvidyā's Tantric roots. His works, like those of the majority within Śrīvidya, were composed only intending to instruct the initiated and were not designed to defend a theological agenda.

Based on initiation and secrecy and committed to the private transmission of its teachings, Śrīvidyā adepts are curiously detached from outside opinion. However, the tradition's Brahmanical influences affect deeply its self evaluation. Viewing themselves within the mainstreams of Hindu society and frequently referring to Vedic works and

ritual traditions, Śrīvidyā adepts make no special effort to defend or explain their tradition to "outsiders". This general unwillingness to engage in philosophical debate or discuss as a public issue the interpretation of controversial Tantric practices is part of a deliberate effort to exclude Śrīvidyā from being considered simply another theological alternative. Adepts consider all other forms of theology and ritual practice as subordinate to their secret practice: the absence of arguments for such claims of spiritual superiority only serve to reinforce the established view.

This dual-edged strategy of maintaining popular, mainstream theological and ritual concepts and yet remaining aloof from outside criticism has not always worked as successfully for other Tantrics as it has for Śrīvidyā adepts. Śrīvidyā has avoided the opprobrium cast upon some Tantrics for Kaula-influenced practices considered morally suspect (such as the use of the pañcamakāras). This is probably due to its having spread and flourished among high-caste Śaivas from a very early period. But it is undoubtedly its close knit internal structure, exemplified by historical commentators such as Bhāskararāya who ignore "outside" criticism, that contributes most to its historical continuity. Śrīvidyā adepts rarely stray from their primary mission: to transmit and interpret the tradition within

their own lineages. All other concerns are strictly secondary including any opinions expressed by one lineage about another. The lasting prosperity of the tradition is in large part due to this self-contained approach to issues and the constant attention paid to the maintenance of teachings within the teacher-student relationship. One can only conclude that Śrīvidyā's self-sufficiency and unwillingness to engage in the usual give and take of philosophical rhetoric is a purposeful attempt to stay outside the fray of public debate.

Yet unlike the majority of Tantric schools, Śrīvidyā has had a public dimension in its teachings and arguably a more visible influence on the broader spectrum of Hindu thought than any other sect of Śākta Tantrism. This is due in no small measure to the position of adepts as leaders within the larger community. Bhāskararāya is also a paradigm of this type of figure: renowned as a Vedic scholar, a master of mantraśāstra and a ritual expert, he was respected by conservative, upper-caste religious elements, favored by the ruling class and exercised such profound influence on the popular religious activities of his day that his legacy continues to affect contemporary society.

Śrīvidyā is a secret tradition inasmuch as its sophisticated theology and ritual training remains within a

closed sphere of initiates. But as intellectuals and community leaders, Śrīvidyā adepts have been deeply involved in public religious life; its proponents view their wider influence as part of a larger responsibility to Hindu society. With societal leadership came at least the appearances of the private tradition and, most evidently, the appearance of the śrīcakra in public forms of Saiva temple worship. Bhāskararāya, for example, is credited with the establishment of śrīcakras as primary objects of worship within already established Śaiva/Śākta shrines throughout south India.[62] The same is true of Saṅkarācarya. Regardless of who is personally responsibility for these individual acts, the significant point is that Śrīvidyā adepts are credited with public religious authority having visible and documented effects. In the case of the placement of the śrīcakra, an "unsanctioned" ritual and iconographic element appears to supercede established sources as Āgamas. As one contemporary adept noted:

> There is no scriptural source sanctioning the presence of a śrīcakra within a Hindu temple, or the practice of any śrīcakra worship. In every case what we see is that the śrīcakra has been put there by a saint or Śrīvidyā teacher whose own spiritual power has permitted him. People who know what is sanctioned in the Āgamas accept this unsanctioned form of worship. This is because there is no disputing that this is the highest form of the Devī and that some of the practice can be done openly. But what you see in temples is not the śrīcakra worship you see when it is done privately.[63]

C. Regional and Vernacular Sources of Śrīvidyā and further remarks on the concept of Authority and Scripture

Before concluding this brief historical review mention should be made of Śrīvidyā's influence on regional literature in south India. There is no better example of this than the Navāvāraṇakīrthās of Muttuswāmi Dikṣitar. These songs, composed in Sanskrit, praise various beneficent aspects of the goddess and take their name from the division of the śrīcakra into nine sub-cakras or āvāraṇas (literally, "obstacles"). As a theological source they have not had a particular influence on Srīvidyā but as part of Tamil devotionalism their importance extends far beyond the narrow circle of initiated Śrīvidyā tradition.

Contemporary adepts maintain Muttuswāmi, one of the three most famous composers of Karṇāṭik classical music, was in fact a Śrīvidyā adept and displayed a rather typical interest in other deities and forms of worship. One adept remarked:

> The songs are meant to praise and worship Devī in ways accessible to everyone. They are part of Śrīvidyā at the level of being available to all no matter how limited their qualifications for other forms of worship such as śrīcakra pūjā.[64]

While there is no historical evidence to support these claims, popular Tamil lore asserts that Muttuswāmi directed his personal devotions to the goddess. The songs themselves

are frequently heard as devotional additions to the formal prescriptions of Śrīvidyā worship. The argument, however, is not that the songs have influenced Śrīvidyā but rather that Śrīvidyā has influenced Muttuswāmi. This belief too is based only on circumstantial evidence since the songs themselves do not make further explicit mention of Śrīvidyā's particular theological components. Contemporary adepts, however, univocally agree on this relationship of Muttuswāmi to Śrīvidyā and their opinions have, at least to some degree, carried into contemporary popular belief.

The bulk of regional literature in south Indian vernacular languages is either in the form of devotional songs, such as the Tamil songs of Muttuswāmi, or in the form of commentaries written to gloss major Sanskrit works. Since virtually all oral instruction in Śrīvidyā is given in local languages their role in the transmission of the tradition is significant to the study of the interpretation of literary sources and the practice of rituals. While vernacular sources have only limited regional appeal, unlike the majority of works in Sanskrit, the interpretation of Sanskrit sources, transmitted primarily through the vernaculars, depends in large measure on regional oral traditions. Without the vernacular oral tradition maintaining the vitality of the literary Sanskrit sources,

the core of Śrīvidyā teaching becomes increasingly remote and inaccessible to all but a few highly qualified initiates.[65] Though it is difficult to evaluate the influence of regional vernaculars quantitatively, the scholar of Tantrism must remain mindful of their influence on the attitudes and practices of a sect that crosses regional boundaries. Regional culture, customs, symbols and myths are part and parcel of the transmission of Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit-based tradition and if the scholar is to consider the relationship between historical sources and their regional interpretations and practices then he must also value vernacular and oral materials.

Certain Sanskrit texts, such as the Tripurārahasya (TR), have had only a regional appeal. The majority of manuscripts of the TR, for example, are in south Indian libraries and its speculations continue to form part of the transmission of Śrīvidyā in the south.[66] But such sources also reveal that texts have fallen in and out of vogue following currents within a region's historical transmission of tradition. There is no evidence, for example, that TR exercised an influence on Bhāskararāya or his eighteenth and nineteenth century disciples. Works, such as the VT and TT, have been so essential from Śrīvidyā's initial stages that their importance transcends regional factors while others, such as the TR and SRK, have exercised influence only in

certain restricted areas---in this case the south.

Numerous examples can be given of sources reflecting predominantly northern strains of Śrīvidyā, such as the <u>Sammohana Tantra</u>.[67] This late Tantra's origins are unknown but its influence has been felt primarily in Bengal and Kashmir and one might tentatively conclude that it was composed somewhere northern India (Bengal?).[68]

It is, of course, more common that Sanskrit sources cross regional boundaries with interpretations differing according to local factors such as custom, historical precedent and the influence of regional figures. While these influences shape the meaning and relative importance of a source within a given region, a text's fate also depends upon the traditions of particular lineages. There are cases, for example, of Śrīvidyā gurus having been influenced by particular works but not including them as part of the formal instruction of the lineage. Such sources become only tangentially important for succeeding generations and may eventually come to a point where the attributable influence is completely unknown and yet retained as part of the lineage's transmission. Particular influences derived from such tangential sources may completely pass away as generations build upon interpretations but the cumulative effect of oral transmissions and obscured sources colors each lineage's

values and practices. As we have observed, the transmission and value of particular written, historical sources depends to a large extent on the individual guru acting as final authority. Gurus have retained the right to read all forms of scripture, be they Tantras claiming a divine origin or <u>śāstras</u> with known historical authors, to suit their needs and to decide each disciple's case individually. Selective reading of sources and even more discriminating and selective transmission of materials remain key factors for determining the continuity of a particular lineage with the broader perspective of the sect. Final authority rests with the guru, the living embodiment of the teachings brought to spiritual fulfillment.

The general view towards scripture is not unlike the Buddhist concept of <u>upāya</u> in which each individual's instruction differs according to the teacher's determination of the individual's needs. But such a guru-centered view of authority must not ignore the role of historical precedents, both as they are passed through sources and in the more personal contexts of guru/disciple transmission. Śrīvidyā gurus, for example, frequently go beyond the boundaries set forth by their own teachers both in terms of textual sources and in assimilation of other influences. In this way the tradition is not limited solely to materials individual teachers choose to pass onto students and yet as a tradition

committed to particular views and interpretations works within certain self-imposed constraints. As one adept put it:

> It is our duty to go beyond what our teachers have taught, that is, to become even greater than him. But this is not an easy task. The guru is like Siva, whatever he says we are to do we must do. But this does not mean that we can do whatever he does without his permission. He may drink a caldron of hot iron to quench his thirst but what would happen to us if we followed him in this? If I study a work that my teacher has not taught me I must ask his spiritual permission and if he is no more [living] then I must ask my inner mind if it is part of our tradition. But I must never assume that what I think is tradition is important unless I receive some signal from some authority that it is acceptable. I may read anything but I can only adopt limited things.[69]

The authority of a literary or oral source for a Śrīvidyā adept depends not only on the source---whether it is considered applicable as a whole or in parts---but on whether a guru has in some measure accepted it as being within his or her lineage teachings. This entails an acknowledgement that its substance was either taught previously within the lineage or is appropriate to the lineage's interpretation. As the adept cited above points out, he is not free individually to make this decision but must respond to "tradition" as an authority, that is, he must judge a source's merits by its consistency within the history, theology and practice of his own lineage's understanding of Śrīvidyā.

Sources bearing the title Tantra are subjected to this rather complex litmus test in order to determine whether they are scripturally authoritative within a particular lineage. But certainly the single most important criterion for the determining the authority of any source (or part of a source) is guru's decision that it is applicable to a particular disciple's spiritual needs. Thus a text, such as a Tantra, may be deemed "scripture" inasmuch as it is agreed to be of divine origin, taught by Śiva or Śakti at a certain time to address specific needs, but it may not be deemed authoritative to a particular lineage or segment of tradition. Lakṣmīdhara when interpreting the Samayācara, for example, never says that "objectionable" Kaula Tantras are not the words of Śiva nor does he imply that they lack authority for non-Samayācārins; he merely maintains that they are not relevant sources for the Samaya interpretation and do not apply Samayācārins. He restricts the authority of scriptures by creating certain criteria of qualification---some actions, for example, twice-born caste initiates are prohibited from performing while other persons (i.e., śūdras) are not so constrained. Lakṣmīdhara's point is not necessarily to vitiate the authority of an entire category of materials belonging to the larger tradition but to impose his lineage's set of values on written and oral sources.

Thus in their selective reading Śrīvidyā gurus begin by generally accepting as "scriptural" a corpus of literature that is then determined to be relevant to the qualifications of their lineage. Kaula Śrīvidyā adepts, for example, maintain that the sources espousing the use of the _pañcamakāras_ are of a higher order than others but do not maintain that all Kaulas are qualified to follow them. This determination is left to the guru. Lakṣmīdhara, on the other hand, rejects the _pañcamakāras_ for Samayins and twice-born practitioners but does not exclude non-twice-borns from Samayācāra. This "selective" determination of sources as authoritative is quite different than a mere acceptance of a work as scriptural. One adept summarized the method in this way:

> As a Śākta and a Tantric I accept all the Tantras as authoritative and by that I mean that all of them have come from God. But I do not necessarily follow them. This is not different than what we do with the Vedas. I am a Yajur Vedin, I follow the Yajur Veda on certain ritual matters and for some things the Apastamba Dharmasūtra. This does not mean that I reject the Ṛg Veda or the other Vedas or that I reject other Dharmaśāstras. It only means that I follow this one, not that others are not true. The same is true of the Tantras. We follow the teaching we are taught because it is suited to us. It may not be suited to others who have been taught something else.[70]

Hence each traditional lineage defines the boundaries of its own views and leaves open the possibility that "new" teachings may find a way into the transmission. The

continuity of Śrīvidyā over the generations has undoubtedly depended on a balance between this conservation of the past and innovation in the present. The Tantric tradition's emphasis on secrecy reinforces conservative forces while at the same time enables adepts to respond dynamically to text, history and living interpreters as individuals. Certain texts and influential historical figures endure the vicissitudes of time but not without the ever changing human elements that bring tradition into practice.

Śrīvidyā has avoided becoming an historical fossil primarily because it has successfully integrated theoretical and speculative elements into practice and has accommodated change by retaining powerful links to the past. This is a result of the flexible but conservative structure of authority and the open but principled interpretation of scripture.

1. See Hacker, Paul, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre und Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Īsvara," ZDMG, 1950, pp.246-286; Hacker, Paul, "Die Lehre von den Realitätsgraden im Advaita-Vedānta," ZMR., 1952, pp.277ff.; Hacker, Paul, "Saṅkara der Yogin und Śaṅkara der Advaitin," WZKSO, 1968/1969, pp.119ff.; Hacker, Paul, "Saṅkarācārya and Saṅkarabhāgavatpāda," New Indian Antiquary, April-June 1947; Kunjunniraja, K., "The Date of Śaṁkarācārya and Allied Problems," Brahma Vidyā (=Adyar Library Bulletin) Vol.24, 1960, pp.125-148; Mayeda, S., "The Authenticity of the Upadeśa Sāhasrī," JAOS, 1965, No.2, pp.178-196; Mayeda, S., "On the Authenticity of the Māṇḍūkya and the Gauḍapādīya Bhāṣya," Brahma Vidyā (=Adyar Library Bulletin), 1967-1968, pp.74ff.; Mayeda, S., "The Authenticity of the Bhāgavadgītābhāṣya Ascribed to Śaṅkara," WZKSO, IX (1965), pp.155-197; Vetter, T., "Zur Bedeutung des Illusionismus bei Śaṅkara," WZKSO, 1968-1969, pp.407-423.

2. Śaṅkara is attributed at least of the latter portion of the Saundaryalaharī which is distinguished from the first forty-one verses, the Ānandalaharī, usually attributed to Siva. This matter is taken up below. On his authorship of SL and matters concerning the text's composition see Brown's critical edition and translation, pp.25-30: The Saudaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty, Traditionally ascribed to Saṅkarācārya, ed. and trans. by W. Norman Brown. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Appearing as Vol.43 in The Harvard Oriental Series, edited by Daniel H.H. Ingalls. Hereafter cited as Brown. On the issue of the authenticity of the works attributed to Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda see Endnote 1 above.

3. See Brown, p.26; also Endnote 14.

4. The text has been edited in several editions. See HTSL, p.131, ftn.3 for a list of published editions and comments on the composition and content of the PS. All references are to the reprinted text cited as PS: Prapañcasāra Tantra of Śaṅkarācārya with the Commentary Vivaraṇa by Padmapādācārya and Prayogakramadīpikā---a Vṛtti on the Vivaraṇa, revised and documented with exhaustive Introduction by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) and edited by Atalananda Sarasvati, Parts I, II in One Vol. Calcutta, 1914 (as Tantrik Text Series Vol. XIX), reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

5. PS, p.129ff.

6. HTSL, p.29f. and p.131f. The oral traditions surrounding this text may date from before the eleventh century if Sivananda, author of the Ṛjuvimarśinī, is placed in this period. He makes mention of the PS frequently in his commentary on NSA. See NSA, p.349f. and Endnote 7.

7. See HTSL, p.131ff.; for references to the citations made by Śivananda see Dwiveda, NSA, vyākhyādvayoddhṛtaślokārdhanukramani, pp.349-360.

8. See HTSL, p.132 for a discussion of the commentarial literature on PS and also the above cited PS edition.

9. See Brown, p.27.

10. Cf., his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v. 9. On the distinction between Śaṅkara and Śaṅkara Bhāgavatpāda see the article by Paul Hacker cited in Endnote 1.

11. See Karl Potter's Introduction in: An Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy, Vol.3, Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and his Pupils, edited with an Introduction by Karl Potter. Reprint edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981. Also Brown, p.28.

12. For a summary of Mantramahodahi see HTSL, p.137. It has recently been translated also, see: Mantramahodadhi, trans. by a Board of Scholars. New Delhi: Sat Guru Publications, 1983.

13. For references to editions and remarks on the Sāradātilaka see HTSL, p.134f.

14. Śrī Lalitā Triśati Bhāṣya of Śrī Śaṁkara Bhāgavatpada, An English Translation with Introduction by Dr. Chaganti Suryanarayana Murthy. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyā Bhavan, 1975. On the transmission of the text see the Introduction, p.xiv.

15. LTSB, Introduction, pp.xiv-xv.

16. This mantra-based structure of the text also leads to long discussions of the bījākṣara hrīm since it occurs sixty times as the first component of three groups of twenty names. The quotation cited here is by "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, January, 1985.

17. LTSB, n.99, reads **paramānandarūpa muktiḥ.** While Śaṅkara interprets the Upaniṣadic attribution of ānanda to Brahman (cf., Chāndogya Upaniṣadbhāṣya) as a matter of course, he tends to eschew this characteristic in favor of

others. In his non-dualistic system the question as to whose is such a bliss causes serious conceptual problems. If it is the Self (ātman) then does it experience ānanda as an object? This would undermine the Self's ultimacy by positing an "experiencer". If the ānanda is attributed to the conceptual self (jīva) then how can it be a characteristic of the supreme Brahman? Hence, Śaṅkara avoids the discussion whenever possible. Śāktas, however, like all Tantrics, lay a heavy emphasis on the ānanda aspect of Brahman since they wish to assert its resemblance in kind to worldly forms of happiness and stress it as a primary motivating force for practicing a spiritual discipline. Under LTS n.240, for example, the author of the commentary asserts that the goddess grants all gradations of bliss from human forms (manusānanda) to the bliss of Brahman (brahmānanda). See also Hacker as cited above for a discussion of the role of the term ānanda in Śaṅkara's works.

18. See Hacker and Mayeda cited above in Endnote 1.

19. A senior member of the "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

20. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, February, 1985.

21. The nine commentaries are printed in a single edition that is privately published and not easily available: Saundaryalaharī of Śrī Śaṅkara Bhāgavatpādācārya with the commentaries (in Sanskrit) Lakṣmīdharā, Saubhāgyavārdhanī, Aruṇāmodinī, Ānandagirīya, Tātpāryadīpinī, Padārthacandrikā, Dinḍima Bhāṣya, Gopālasundarī and Ānandalaharī Ṭīka. Edited and Published by A. Kuppuswami, Tiruchirapalli, India, 1976. All references to commentaries on SL are drawn from this edition unless otherwise specified. Another edition has drawn more scholarly reference but has been superceded by Brown. See Saundaryalaharī of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, with Lakṣmīdhara's Commentary, Bhāvanopaniṣat...and Devī Pañcastāvi, edited by N.N. Swami Ghanapati. Mysore: Mysore Government Press, University of Mysore, Oriental Library Publications, Sanskrit Series no.11/85, 1945; third edition, revised for reprint by Pandit S. Narayanaswami Sastry, No.11/85/91, 1953.

Concerning the unpublished manuscripts see Brown. A review of manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras and at the Sarasvati Mahal in Thanjavur revealed that one of the commentaries, the so-called Candrikā attributed to the famous Appaya Dīkṣita is not a gloss on SL at all but a work of Vedānta. It is not likely to be an authentic work of this Advaita philosopher.

22. On Lakṣmīdhara's life, date and work see HTSL, p.147f.; also Brown, p.26, ftn.10.

23. Notwithstanding the work of one Rāmānanda who composed it seems commentaries on both the Tripurā and Tripurātāpini Upaniṣads. Rāmānanda follows Lakṣmīdhara's views to the letter, as it were, and frequently cites him as his source. He does not, however, contribute anything new to the Samaya view and has had no discernable influence on subsequent Srividya tradition. There is no indication of his date or reference to his work in other sources. He also appears to be almost completely unknown to contemporary adepts. Only his Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya is available in print (see Appendix One, Introduction for details) and at least one copy of the Tripurātāpini Upaniṣadbhāṣya in manuscript form in the Adyar, Library, Madras.

24. HTSL, p.147.

25. In contemporary traditions in south India, for example, discussion of the SL invariably turns to Lakṣmīdhara's interpretations. Even among professed Kaulas who disagree with Lakṣmīdhara's rejection of the pañcamakāras, for example, he is still held in esteem as an interpreter of the esoteric significance of the text. This is also true among a more select group who further reject his attribution of Saṅkara's authorship.

26. Another important point concerning this author's work is that his commentary on the Āruṇa Upaniṣad is actually not an independent work but is incorporated, verses and all, into the SL commentary. This has escaped the notice of the several editors that include the Lakṣmīdharā in their editions of SL as well as the editors of the Upaniṣad itself, cf., the Avalon edition of the Kaula and other Śākta Upaniṣads, ed. L. Sastri with an Introduction by Arthur Avalon. Calcutta: University Press, 1921. Tantrik Texts Series, Vol. X.

27. It is held by some contemporary adepts that Kaivalyāśrama does, in fact, predate Lakṣmīdhara by a century or two. This opinion is grounded, however, on unsubstantiated literary evidence and the absence of Kaivalya's mention of Lakṣmīdhara---neither of which authenticates the theory.

28. For a discussion of the thirty-six tattvas or categories of reality that make up reality as it emanates from Brahman see HT, p.52f. It should be noted that contemporary adepts cite the PKS (cf.,1.4) and VVR

(cf.,1.36) as the sources for generating lists of the tattvas. Discrepancies between various lists were not considered an important issue. This underlines the fact that strictly metaphysical matters are not given particular emphasis or laden with importance unless they bear on Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline---a general propensity shared across Tantrism. More important to contemporary adepts was the identification of the thirty-six tattvas with the Śrīcakra as the form of emanation. The tattvas themselves are important inasmuch as they are incorporated into the larger ritual picture rather than as a matter of pure metaphysical speculation.

29. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

30. See Brown edition, pp.25-30.

31. Brown, p.20.

32. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

33. HTSL, p.168.

34. Given Goudriaan's references to early authorities it seems likely that he has not himself investigated this situation. It is at least superficially apparent that the confusion has existed because the two texts bear the same title. The Subhagodaya is not widely read and it is altogether possible that there are, in fact, two sources with two different authors.
These sources are in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras and in the Adyar Library, both lacking proper identification numbers.

35. For editions and further information on the printed edition of the text see The Śrīvidyāratnasūtras of Gauḍapādācārya with the Dīpikā of Śaṅkarāraṇya, edited by Gopinath Kaviraj. Varanasi, 1926.

36. A senior member of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

37. On the dates of Amṛtānanda see V.V. Dwiveda, Sanskrit preface (Anupratāvikam) to Kaviraj's edition of the YH, p.5; also HTSL, p.152.

38. For editions of the KKV see HTSL, p.168. References made here refer to the Madras 1971 reprint edition: Tantrarāja Tantra and Kāmakalāvilāsa together with a

translation of parts of the commentary (Cidvalli) by Naṭānandanātha, edited by John Woodroffe, trans. by R. Krishnaswami Aiyar. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1971, fourth reprint edition. Goudriaan also lists several other editions which include reference to vernacular commentaries.

39. One such recent translation into Tamil: Kāmakalāvilāsa, translated with an Introduction by N. Subrahmanya Aiyar. Madras: Guhananda Mandali Trust, 1956.

40. See HTSL, p.168-169 and ftn.22, p.169. For Bharati's remark see: Bharati, Agehananda, The Tantric Tradition. New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., revised American paperback edition, 1975, p.75.

41. They are included in Dwiveda's edition of the NSA, pp.306-328.

42. See La Mahārthamañjarī de Maheśvarānanda avec des extraits du Parimala, traduction et introduction par Lilian Silburn. Paris: Publications de L'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1968, Introduction, p.9f. [Hereafter, Silburn, Mahesvarananda]

43. See Dwiveda's Sanskrit Introduction (Upodghāta) to the NSA, p.28.

44. HTSL, p.148.

45. The text is presently being edited for publication by Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy of Madurai-Kamaraj University. For details concerning its contents as well as selections from the text in translation see HTSL, p.152f.

We should reiterate, however, that Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa is not the Vidyananda who authored the Artharatnāvali on NSA nor is it clear that he is the author of the Jñānadipavimarśinī simply because he bears the same initiated name as that text's author. Regarding the latter text a further study of the available manuscripts must be performed before reaching any conclusion.

46. HTSL, p.151. If this is the case then it is very curious that his disciple took upon himself the task of composing another, more elaborate paddhati covering much the same material.

47. HTSL, p.148 and p.148, ftn.41. This date seems to be based on the assumption that the author of the SRK is identical to the author of the Jñānadipavimarśinī which is quoted by Amṛtānanda in his YHDīpikā. Dr. Sundaramoorthy

who is presently editing the SRK has not reached a satisfactory conclusion regarding Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa's date.

48. Paraśurāmakalpasūtra with the commentary by Rāmeśvara Sūri entitled Saubhāgyodaya, ed. by A.M. Sastri and S.Y. Dave. Baroda: M.S. University of Baroda Press, first edition, 1923, second revised edition, 1950, reprint edition, 1979. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no.22)

49. Paraśurāma is mythologically connected to Kerela. See Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 9.15.16ff.

50. HTSL, p.150; also see NSA edition, pp.349-360.

51. For further details on the selective reading and interpretation of Śrīvidyā sources by contemporary adepts see Part Two.

52. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.15.

53. Both, for example, make use of a text known only by name, the so-called Saṅketapaddhati. It just so happens, however, that all of Rāmeśvara's citations appear in Bhāskararāya's works even when the latter does not acknowledge this work as the source.

54. Nityotsava by Umānandanātha, edited by A.M. Sastri. Baroda: M.S. University of Baroda Press, 1923, revised edition by Swami Trivikrama Tirtha, 1948. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no.23)

55. This interpretation making Umānanda consistent with Bhāskararāya is plausible but not likely. How then do we explain this discrepancy considering the strong stand Bhāskararāya took on the issue? One possibility is that Bhāskararāya actually taught this tradition to Umānanda for the sake of continuity with the majority view. According to contemporary adepts, Bhāskararāya actually belonged to the so-called Ānandabhairava sampradāya which admits the vṛttatraya as the three outer circles but prescribes no pūjā for them. This seems contrary to Bhāskararāya's stated position (cf., Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.4) which would suggest that he follows the Hayagrīva sampradāya and does not accept the presence of the outside three circles. Another possibility is that Rāmeśvara is actually correct, that is, that Bhāskararāya did not revise the Nityotsava. That Umānanda was not his disciple, however, goes against all traditions but is not out of the realm of possibilities. Further investigations into the situation with Bhāskararāya's familial descendants suggest that Umānanda

was his actual disciple but that he may or may not have taught this concept to his trusted disciple. See Part Two for details of the interviews conducted with the lineages claiming Bhāskararāya's spiritual inheritance.

56. Neither is he to be confused with the Jagannātha who composed religious poetry in Hindi though this is not an identification made in Śrīvidyā literature.

57. Printed in the edition: Lalitāsahasranā[illegible]otra with the Saubhāgyabhāskara of Bhāskararāya, ed[illegible]d by M.K. Sastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sāgara Press, 1921.

58. The Bhāskaravilāsa cites, for example, a commentary on the PKS attributed to Bhāskararāya entitled the Ratnāloka. It seems unlikely that this text ever existed except in name since it has gone completely unnoticed by Rāmeśvara (whose commentary on PKS is quite complete in respect to references) and is not known at all in contemporary traditions. Cf., remarks by S. Subrahmanya Sastri in his Introduction to the VVR, pp.xxx-xxxiv.

59. The Hṛdayāmṛta of Umānandanātha, edited by A. Sastri. Hyderabad, A.P., India: Ananda Trust, 1981.

60. See the Introduction to the VVR, p.xxii.

61. For a list editions of the VVR see HTSL, p.170, ftn.28. All references here refer to: Varivasyārahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin, edited with English translation by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, first edition 1934, fourth edition 1976. All references are to the fourth edition.

For a more complete discussion of the chronology of Bhāskararāya's work and especially the Upaniṣad commentaries see the Introduction to Appendix One.

62. In one case mentioned in the Bhāskaravilāsa it is noted that Bhāskararaya had a temple to his family deity, the goddess Candrālambā, constructed in the form of a śrīcakra. In his renovation of the temple of Bhāskareśvara in Bhāskararājapuram, according to contemporary authorities, he established a śrīcakra. Śaṅkarācārya is credited with establishing a number of śrīcakras both for the first time and within already established temples such as famous shrine of Kāmākṣī in Kāñcipuram. While there may be some truth to the claims surrounding Bhāskararāya, if there was a Śaṅkarācārya involved in the latter cases we can be certain that it was not the so-called Ādiśaṅkara of the eighth

century. The possibility that it was a Śankarācārya still exists since all the heads of the maṭhas of the Sankara tradition bear this name as a title. The same can be said of the written sources attributed to Śankara on Śrīvidyā and Śākta topics. How an ascetic has been credited with this involvement of establishing an icon within a temple is yet another issue.

63. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

64. A senior female member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

65. This is, in fact, the case. Within the living lineages of adepts in south India one finds only one or two individuals with enough training in Sanskrit to read original sources. The situation is further complicated by the inaccessibility of printed editions and the breakdown of the traditional system of passing manuscripts on within lineages. These and other issues are taken up in Part Two.

66. For the details concerning the Tripurārahasya see HTSL, p.166f. The well-known sage of Tiruvanamalai, the late Rāmana Mahārṣi, for example, was so influenced by the TR that the authorities of his Āśrama trust have seen fit to publish an English translation of the work. Rāmana, they maintain, was a Śrīvidyā worshipper (though there is no direct evidence in his sayings to confirm this) and following his personal instructions a śrīcakra was installed within the shrine dedicated to Devī on the Āśrama grounds.

67. This text is later incorporated into the SST as its fourth khaṇḍa, see HTSL, p.68f.

68. Cf., HTSL, p.23; HT, p.43. Bharati has contended that SST has had a significant impact throughout India though he presents no evidence to support this claim; see Bharati, p.75.

69. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

70. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, March, 1985.

Part One
Chapter Five
The Beneficent Goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī:
The Sthūla Aspect

Śrīvidyā sources maintain that Śakti in her supreme aspect manifests as the benign (saumya), motherly and beautiful Goddess. This figure contrasts sharply with the terrifying forms in the familiar images of Kālī and Durgā. As the consort of Śiva the beneficent goddess is known most conspicously by the names Lalitā, Tripurā/Tripurasundarī, Śrī and Lakṣmī. As Lalitā and Tripurasundarī her quasi-independence from Śiva and superiority over other feminine aspects is emphasized; in the case of the names Śri and Lakṣmī, her association with Viṣṇu as his consort is consdiered secondary. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts prefer to call the goddess "Śrīdevī" in order to distinguish their position from certain Vaiṣṇava theological schools in which Viṣṇu alone is considered the highest form of divinity and Śakti is consigned to subordinate role. But like Śrī and Lakṣmī in Vaiṣṇava tradition, Lalitā too exhibits the qualities that exemplify the ideals of classical Hindu womanhood. While Śakti maintains the dominant theological position in the Śākta theology, she simultaneously in the position of the dutiful and obedient wife of Śiva, that is, the sumaṅgalī who fulfills both domestic and social roles. She is called saubhāgya, the "prosperous" or the

"bountiful", because from this idealized perspective she is complete in her roles as wife and mother and as such is the deity who confers the blessings of prosperity.

Śākta Tantra sources describe the anthropomorphic mother goddess as the physcial or "gross" aspect (sthūla) that accompanies the more subtle (sūkṣma) mantric and transcendent (parā) yantric forms. The anthropomorphic goddess is the primary focus of loving devotion (bhakti) and the goddess's most universally recognized and "accessible" aspect. Lalitā's physical description and beneficent character are identified with localized goddesses bearing comparable attributes. In her physical form, it is said, any Hindu can approach her since this aspect is not ordinarily restricted to the specially qualified. Those qualities and attributes that Lalitā Tripurasundarī represents as a Tantric deity are best described in the works of Śrīvidyā's foremost historical exponents.

Rāmeśvara in his commentary on PKS, 1.5. says that the sthūla aspect is known through the dhyānaślokas which describe her and form the basis for meditation.[1] These "verses for meditation" appear commonly in ritual manuals and mantric digests (paddhatis and nibandhas). They not only describe the physical features of the goddess but further distinguish Lalitā's youthful aspect (bālā) from the mature form (saubhāgya) that lies at the center of Śrīvidyā

worship.

The youthful Bālātripurasundarī is a subordinate aspect of the mature Lalitā. She is worshipped almost exclusively in her mantric aspect as preparation for the "higher" and more subtle forms of Saubhāgyatripurasundarī or Mahātripurasundarī. In other words, Tripurasundarī's youthful aspect in a physical form is not an object of devotion apart from the worship of the mature image. Adepts also consider Bālā as a subordinate aspect within a mantric hierarchy of qualification (adhikāra) in which she is part of the larger scheme of ritual contemplation (upāsana). The figure of Bālā is rarely depicted in the physical form (sthūla) and in the mantric form appears to be known only to a select group of Śāktas, particularly to Śrīvidyā adepts. Though youthful and virginal aspects of the goddess are well-known in Śākta tradition, in Śrīvidyā this form of the goddess is considered strictly an "introductory" aspect; only the mature image recieves the attention of traditional historical commentators.

A dearth of historical evidence precludes dating the emergence of the names Lalitā or Tripurā but it appears safe to assume they were known before the development of the corresponding mantric and yantric aspects.[2] Lalitā, as a name of the beneficent goddess, appears in the early Purāṇas and in special connection with pilgrimages made to her

shrine in the city of Prayāg.[3] From these sources we may conclude that the name Lalitā was popular throughout India by no latter than the sixth century.[4] When the name Lalitā and the depiction of this goddess in her familiar form are identified with the supreme Śakti is not as certain; the origins of the name also remains obscure.

In Śrīvidyā tradition, Lalitā Tripurasundarī is described in a dhyānaśloka that, with minor variations, is common to both historical and contemporary sources. Before undertaking any form of worship on the anthropomorphic (sthūla) Lalitā, the adept recites the following verse:

> I contemplate the Goddess who is red [in color or dress and] bears [in her four hands] the noose, the goad, the flower arrows and the bow [of sugarcane], [She who] with [her] lustre envelops the [twelve siddhis] beginning with the power to be minute.[5]

This dhyānaśloka, and others comparable, are the standard references for Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī's sthūla aspect. Occuring in the practical ritual digests (paddhatis and nibandhas) this description agrees with the more elaborate picture drawn in the opening sections of the Lalitāsahasranāma (LSN).[6]

In the LSN, Lalitā is depicted as seated on the lion's throne like a great queen (vs.2-3) having emerged from the alter of the fire of consciousness (v.4). Manifesting herself to fulfill the wishes of the gods (v.5) and shining

like a thousand suns (v.6) she has four arms and holds in her hands the noose of desire (vs.7-8), the elephant goad of wrath and worldly knowledge (v.9), the sugarcane bow of the mind (v.10) and the arrows of the five essences (tanmātras) (v.11). She bathes the universe in her rosy complexion (v.12), wearing flowers in her hair and a crown of jewels (vs.13-14). She bears the auspicious mark of marriage and is modest in her demeanor (vs.16-25); her thin waist is burdened by her heavy breasts (vs.36) and the Lord of Desire is drowned in the fullness of her smile (v.28); she is dressed in red adorned with a belt of jewelled bells and the crescent moon glimmering above her crown (vs.29-51). The text then lists remaining attributes that complete the picture of Lalitā's supremacy over the other divinities and the superiority of her worship.

In contemporary depictions the śrīcakra is often placed at Lalitā's feet in a fashion similar to Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram, the localized figure most directly resembling this anthropomorphic image. The focus of Lalitā's relationship to localized goddesses, however, is not merely in her physical resemblences or similar disposition but in a relationship with the śrīcakra. Each localized form retains its own particular anthropomorphic characteristics, mythology and often has its own dhyānaśloka; yet each is identified with the śrīcakra. Lalitā is the paradigm of the

beneficent goddess encompassing all these various identities and Bhāskararāya does not hesitate to identify certain names in the LSN with localized goddesses, especially the southern deities Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram and Śivakāmasundarī, the consort of Naṭarāja in Cidambaram.[7] In southern India there are no major temples in which Śakti is specifically called Lalitā or Tripurasundarī but this does not suggest that either of these names are wanting in familiarity or that a relationship to other beneficent aspects is lacking.[8]

Lalitā's worship is obviously not restricted to Śrīvidyā adepts nor is the ritual and devotional uses of the LSN. The worship of Lalitā and the recital of her thousand names is a common feature Śākta traditions in all regions of India. Generally speaking, Lalitā is considered the kuladevatā or family deity of the Śrīvidyā tradition and often the iṣṭadevatā or chosen deity of individual Śrīvidyā adepts. Within the families of adepts another deity may be considered the kuladevatā but insofar as an adept belongs to Śrīvidyā the kula deity is Lalitā Tripurasundarī. In addition, while an adept may chose a localized aspect of Śakti as his or her own iṣṭadevatā there is no disputing an intrinsic identity with Lalitā Tripurasundarī.

Lalitā's exoteric anthropomorphic image acquires esoteric significance within Śrīvidyā. Esoteric meanings are given to many of the LSN's thousand names while "Lalitā"

and "Tripurā" are themselves subjects of speculation. Exoteric figures serve as images associated with external ritual and contemplation (bahirpūjā or bahiryāga) while esoteric meanings are forms for internal contemplation (antaryāga). There is little doubt that Lalitā and Tripurā represent the same goddess but in the internalized, esoteric sense each respective name distinguishes different attributes and is explained separately. Bhāskararāya spares no effort in drawing manifold significances to individual names while attributing different levels of meaning.

Lalitā is the less complex of the two common names. At the outset of the LSN Bhāskararāya explains why this particular goddess is the Great Śakti (mahāśakti) and the supreme deity (parādevatā); she is not to be confused with lesser forms or even with other subordinate goddesses bearing the name Lalitā. He says:

> Lalitā: lit. one who plays...Above Śakti and Śiva, there exist manifestations of Parāśakti and of Sadāśiva; each has its own grades and spheres; but Mahāśakti, which is the same as Parāśiva, crossing all worlds, has her residence in that supreme sphere called Mahā-kailāsa, Aparājita, etc. Her body is formed of pure and concentrated sattva without any admixture of rajas and tamas; whereas the other śaktis merely have a preponderance of the sattva over the other two (rajas and tamas) and not pure sattva. Hence she is the highest, the prototype of Parabrahman. There are many secret manifestations of this Goddess, but in this work that particular manifestation termed Kāmeśvarī and known as Lalitā is referred to.[9]

The TT devotes nearly three chapters (chs.4 to 6) to the worship of Lalitā as one of the Nityās (see below) but this involves neither the internalized contemplation of the name nor the supreme Śakti identified with the Śrīvidyā mantra or śrīcakra: it can be supposed that this is "another' Lalitā and not the ultimate or Parāśakti. Other gods in their respective "supreme" aspects are identified with Lalitā. The fourth or Chinnamastākhaṇḍa of the SST identifies Kṛṣṇa with Lalitā, and Rāma as Śiva. Both of these identifications are common to contemporary southern adepts.[10]

Rāmeśvara (PKS, 3.1), with Bhāskararāya's comment on LSN, n.1000 (Lalitāmbikā) in mind, quotes the same passage from Padmapurāṇa as his spiritual mentor in order to provide an esoteric etymology for the name Lalitā. He says:

> The explanation in the Padmapurāṇa is "transcending the worlds (lokanātītya) she sports (lalate) and therefore is called Lalitā."[11]

He continues to explain that Bhāskararāya says Lalitā means the goddess is the imagined embodiment of śṛṅgārabhava, the sentiment of erotic love, which, he says is the foremost of the aesthetic qualities (rasa) of poetic expression (dhvāni).[12] Bhāskararāya, however, takes this to be less important than the relationship of the name Lalitā to the five preceding names. These five names support the view that Lalitā is the supreme form of divinity. He says:

> Thus...the goddess is indicated as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, ...she is indicated as possessing two other functions, namely annihilation and re-manifestation which belong to no other deity...the same deity who possesses these five functions is described in different ways and is indicated by the name Lalita which is her special name and belongs to no other deity.[13]

Regarding the Padmapurāṇa's etymology cited above Bhāskararāya glosses it by saying:

> "Worlds" means her surrounding lights or deities. "Transcending" being above their abodes in the bindu-place. "Sports" shines brilliantly. The wise say, "The word lalitā has eight meanings, namely brilliancy, manifestation, sweetness, depth, fixity, energy, grace and generosity; these are the eight human qualities." The Kāma-śāstra says: Lalitā means erotic actions and also tenderness; as she has all the above-mentioned qualities, she is called Lalitā. It is said also, "Thou art rightly called Laḷitā for thou hast nine divine attendents [in the Śrīcakra] and your bow is made of sugar-cane, your arrows are flowers, and everything connected with you is lovely (lalitā)." The word laḷitā according to the Śabdārṇava means beautiful.[14]

The esoteric meanings of the name Tripurā are considerably more complex since the literal "three cities" suggests the myriad of symbolic triads that abound in Hindu lore as well as those specific to Śākta and Śrīvidyā speculations. These triads can be categorized into three distinct types of speculation though they do, in fact, overlap and converge in the works of the traditional commentators. The typology clarifies the levels of symbolism associated with each name. The task of the

Śrīvidyā adept is to enact externally in ritual and thereby realize internally the meaning of the symbolic triads in their explicit and suggestive senses. "Tripurā" is the key to this process, the focus of ritual and contemplative devotions both as an image and a name conveying an esoteric sense.

(1) Mythological: The mythological is the initial level of instruction explaining the physical form (sthūla-rūpa) of Tripurā, her characteristics and relationship to the cosmos and other deities. The most common association with the term Tripurā is the popular Purāṇic story of the fortress of demons destroyed by Śiva. Though a favorite myth among Tantrics, the tale is not associated with the cultic worship of Tripurā identified with the Śrīvidya mantra and śrīcakra.[15]

Taking the meaning more literally, as the "Three Cities", however, no Śrīvidyā commentator misses the opportunity to identify Tripurā with the trimurti, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Bhāskararāya remarks on LSN, n.626 (Tripurā), "...Devī is called Tripurā because she is older than the three persons (Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra)."[16] Rāmeśvara on PKS, 10.83 makes a similar comment saying, "[She] is eternal, that is, ancient (purā), occuring before the three, creation, maintenence and dissolution."[17]

Quoting the Laghustava Bhāskararāya encapsulates the host of symbolic triads identified with Tripurā:

> There are three Devas, three Vedas, three fires, three energies, three notes (svaras), three worlds, three abodes, (or according to another reading, three cities, three sacred lakes, three castes, namely brāhmana, etc. Whatever in the world is threefold, such as the three objects of human desire, all these, O divine one, really belong to your name.[18]

Bhāskararāya on LSN, n.997 (śrīmattripurasundarī) refers to the goddess as the consort of the male Tripurasundara, that is, Parāśiva, the Supreme Śiva. He is called Tripurā, Bhāskararāya says, "...because the three, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are his body."[19] He goes on to quote Kālikāpurāṇa:

> By the will of the pradhāna the body of Śiva became triple. Then the upper part of Maheśvara became Brahma with five faces, four arms, and whose body had the colour of the pericarp of the lotus. His middle part became Viṣṇu of the blue colour, having one face, four arms, bearing the conch, disc, club and lotus. The lower part became Rudra having five faces, four arms and the colour of a white cloud and the moon as a crest jewel. As these three Pūras are in him, he is called Tripura.[20]

(2) Cosmological/Epistemological: Mythological references gain cosmological and epistemological significance in Śrīvidyā's intellectualization of imagery. The epistemological meaning of Tripurā is perhaps best summarized by Bhāskararāya's succinct comment on LSN, n.234

(mahātripurasundarī). He says that she is called Tripurā because she is, "the measurer, the measuring and the thing measured" or more directly, the knower, knowing and object of knowledge.[21] Śivānanda (Ṛjuvimarśinī on the NSA, 1.12) quotes Prapañcasāra 9.2 to the effect that she called Tripurā not only because she has the three forms (of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva) and is the three creations (heavens, earth and underworlds) but because she has the nature of Śiva, Śakti and Ātman.[22] This series of identifications links Tripurā with all creation, in both latent and manifest forms, and completes the non-dualistic identity of the Absolute Brahman with the individual soul (ātman). Thus Tripurā is identified not only as knowledge itself but as the process of obtaining knowledge. She is identical to the all the components of a valid cognition and hence with the cognizer, cognized and cognizing.

The symbolic triads associated with Tripurā do not merely relate the epistemological process to creation but are part of a deliberate pattern that leads the aspirant to the realization that correct understanding is identical with the source of reality. To know reality is to become it; and in this realization there is nothing "new". As Bhāskararāya says:

> ...Devī is the means to attain one's own real nature. The meaning is that Mokṣa is the attainment of one's own real nature....the jīvas which were before Brahman, became embodied through

> the influence of nescience; when he has got rid of that influence, he has no longer any body and becomes one with Brahman.[23]

According to Śrīvidyā the soteriological process is a reintegration: by knowing how creation has come about materially in the form of the three guṇas and as being, consciousness and bliss (cf., Ṛjuvimarśinī, 1.12), it is possible to reverse the process, that is, to return to the source of being through diligent spiritual discipline (sādhana).

Bhāskararāya goes one step further towards completing the ontological identification of Tripurā with the manifest universe by bringing the śrīcakra into the discussion. He identifies Tripurā with the śrīcakra as a triadic symbol of the cosmos and divides the soteriological path divided into three sets. In his introductory remarks to the commentary on Tripurā Upaniṣad he condenses the five levels of realization that define liberation into a set of three paths that are in turn identified with the 'Three Cities'. He says:

> There are five types of liberation...Among these [five] the first and the last are one path (mārga) each and the middle group of three are another path...
>
> Because there are three paths the cities...are understood to be three. Because [She] pervades the three cities, fills [them] and is in the form of them, the Supreme Deity is called Tripurā... This fivefold division [of

> liberation] into three [paths] explains the attainment of the Goddess.[24]

He goes on to say:

> That [initial] modification [of the One into Three] is [technically] called śānta [literally, peaceful] because it is the aggregate form of desire, knowledge and action. It [insofar as She is identified with Brahman] is called transcendent (parā) because it is the aggregate form of the [primordial sound as it emanates, technically called] paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī. ...She is the aggregate form of [the three consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and their respective powers, namely] Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī.[25]

Triadic symbolism is essential to completing the identification of the anthropomorphic Tripurā with the transcendent (parā) śrīcakra and to linking the creation of the universe with the path to individual reintegration. After describing how creation emanates from the one, represented by the bindu on the śrīcakra, and becomes "threes" (such as the three guṇas), represented by the expanding sets of triangles, each manifesting more explicit and recognizable forms of reality, Bhāskararāya summarizes the identification of Tripurā and śrīcakra by quoting Kālikāpurāṇa.

> Her maṇḍala consists of triangles (trikoṇa), the outer gates (bhūpura) consist of three lines; Her mantra also is said to consist of three syllables [or three groups of syllables] and similarly She has a threefold form. Kuṇḍalinī śakti is threefold and there are three deities in creation. Because everything [connected with her] is three, She is called Tripurā.[26]

Understanding these various levels of esoteric meaning would infer that the aspirant has not only properly conceptualized creation but knows the discipline that leads to its realization; like Tripurā and the śrīcakra, the path itself is conceptualized as threefold. Bhāskararāya provides a characteristic example in the Purāṇa quotation of a Śrīvidyā philosopher linking cosmological speculation with practical forms of spiritual discipline. Theological or speculative efforts are enacted ritually beginning with anthropomorphic forms and eventually culminating with the śrīcakra. The adept, recognizing that the cognitive process is itself a manifestation of Tripurā sets out on the three-staged soteriological path and ascends by means of identifying with the cosmological form of the śrīcakra---composed of sets of triangles. The ritual identification of Tripurā with the śrīcakra is central to the process of reintegrating consciousness in dualistic reality (represented in by the symbolic triad of the "Three Cities") with its non-dual source (represented by the bindu at the center of the śrīcakra).

(3) Yogic: The full implications of these patterns of intellectual identification are seen only when Tripurā is linked to yogic practice and ritual enactment. Bhāskararāya (LSN, n.626) quoting the Tripurārṇavatantra identifies

Tripurā with the three basic nāḍīs or subtle channels that, according to the theories of kuṇḍalinī yoga, control the passage of the breaths.[27] The bodily cakras described in kuṇḍalinī yoga are systematically identified with the sub-cakras of the śrīcakra. These provide the link between the yogic process within the human body and the essentially triadic śrīcakra identified with both the body and the universe.

Śrīvidyā's historical commentators have elaborately demonstrated the coherence of Tripurā's symbolic triads and their relation to the kuṇḍalinī yoga traditions inherited by Śāktism. The esoteric meanings of the goddess's names remain a key element for bringing symbolic imagery into forms of ritual and yogic practice. In this respect Śrīvidyā also typifies a major principle of Tantric traditions: theological and speculative views are devised specifically for practical purposes. The physical (sthūla) aspect of the goddess in both name and form remains an indispensible component for all Śrīvidyā devotees since it bridges exoteric and estoeric traditions. While the physical form of Tripurā is worshipped by initiated and uninitiated alike, Bhāskararāya in his closing remarks on the LSN declares that the goddess's names themselves are a great secret and that, "...the practice of Śrīvidyā, the worship of Śrīcakra and the repetition of this holy

Sahasranāman are not attainable by a slight penance."[28] One can conclude that Bhāskararāya meant not only initiates into Śrīvidyā but all who worship these forms of the goddess.

1. PKS, 1.5, p.26.

2. Textual references to the names Lalitā and Tripurā first occur in the Purāṇas and may harken back to an ancient tradition. There is, however, no substantive historical evidence to support these traditional claims. The name "Tripurā" as the city destroyed by Śiva appears to be distinct from the goddess in her threefold aspects; connections between the two seem coincidental. It also appears clear that while Śrīvidyā adepts may not have "created" the concepts and values surrounding these images, they have significantly contributed to their popular imagery and understanding. There is no suggestion in any Śrīvidyā text that other images or aspects of the goddess provided a more central focus or fertile ground for theological speculation.

3. See Sircar, D.C., The Śākta Pīṭhas. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, second edition, 1973, p.13. References also occur in Śrīvidyā commentaries, cf., Bhāskararāya's remarks on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.6, (the unidentified quotation of Padmapurāṇa) with reference to the pilgrimage center of Prayāg as associated with Lalitā.

4. The reference to Lalitā in Tirumūlar's Tirumantiram confirms this view. See the previous section for details.

5. **aruṇām karuṇātaraṅgitākṣīm dhṛtapāśāṅkuśapuṣpabāṇacāpām/ aṇimādhibhirāvṛtām mayūkhairahamityeva vibhāvaye bhavānīm//**
This verse appears in a number of oral sources but is also preserved in nearly every ritual handbook within Śrīvidyā, see "Aṇṇā's" Mantravidānam for one such reference.

6. LSN, n.1-52. This work's impact on both historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā traditions cannot be underestimated. It is the most widely read and easily available Śrīvidyā source in modern south India. Taken apart from Bhāskararāya's commentary, the Saubhāgyabhāskara, the LSN presents a wholly coherent picture of the beneficent goddess and her multivarious qualities and attributes. With Bhāskararāya's interpretation, it takes on new dimensions, interpreted with his characteristic depth and attention to esoteric detail. The anthropomorphic figure emerging from the description in names one to fifty-two in the Lalitāsahasranāma is the most familiar and complete image of Lalitā's saubhāgya aspect.

7. Cf., LSN, n.734 (naṭeśvarī). Bhāskararāya clearly identifies the goddess as the cosort of Cidambaram Naṭarāja.

8. The particular identification of the goddess depicted in the Lalitāsahasranāma with localized forms is a subject of further enquiry in the study of living Śrīvidyā tradition in Part Two.

9. LSN, I.1, Saubhāgyabhāskara. Sastry, pp.7-8.

10. Śaktisamgamatantra, 4.9.1ff.

11. PKS, 3.1, p.87.

12. PKS, 3.1., p.87.

13. LSN, n.1000. Sastry, p.373.

14. LSN, n.1000. Sastry, pp.373-374.

15. See HT, p.66.

16. Sastry, p.254.

17. PKS, 10.83, p.306.

18. LSN, n.626. Sastry, p.254.

19. Sastry, p.372.

20. Sastry, p.372.

21. LSN, n.234. Sastry, p.129.

22. NSA, 1.12., p.33; cf., PS, 9.2., p.128, Avalon edition.

23. LSN, n.84, Sastry, pp.84-85.

24. See Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

25. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

26. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1.

27. Sastry, p.254.

28. Sastry, p.399 and p.400.

Part One
Chapter Six
The Śrīvidyā Mantra: *śrīvidyā*

A. The Subtle Aspect of Devī

> The one who repeats the fifteen-syllable mantra of Tripurā attains all desires, all enjoyments, conquers all the worlds, causes all words to emerge; achieving identity with Rudra, one breaks through the veil of Viṣṇu and obtains the supreme Brahman.[1]

Śrīvidyā tradition has laid more emphasis on its mantric teachings than on any other form of contemplative worship, including the anthropomorphic Lalitā and the *śrīcakra*. This is apparent not only by the number of works devoted to mantra exposition but in the way Śrīvidyā has developed its identity as a tradition. The heart of Śrīvidyā is initiation into the mantric hierarchy: the core of ritual contemplation is repetition (*japa*) of the root-mantra (*mūlamantra*) of Lalitā. That the tradition takes its name from the mantra is indicative of the major role it plays in metaphysics and practice.

The term *śrīvidyā* is interpreted variously as a grammatical compound. Śrīvidyā is the *vidyā* of Śrī, that is, the wisdom or knowledge of the goddess (*Śrī*) who embodies the auspicious (*śrī*).[2] It is both the knowledge that liberates (*vidyā*) and the wisdom that terms leads to material prosperity (*śrī*). Śrīvidyā traditionalists take both senses concurrently; that which forms the substance of

prosperity and auspiciousness is the goddess who bestows them.

In Mantraśāstra literature, including the Śākta Tantras, the term vidyā, knowledge, also means mantra, especially mantras of female deities. The mantra is the primary revelation of the wisdom that provides both worldly and soteriological insight, it is not merely a symbol of it. Jan Gonda, in "The Indian Mantra" observes:

> The essence of a mantra...is the presence of the deity: only that mantra in which the devata has revealed his or her aspects can reveal that aspect. The deity is believed to appear from the mantra when it is correctly pronounced.[3]

In a more traditional explanation Bhaskararaya etymologizes, "Mantra is pure thought, because it has the quality of protecting (√tra) the person during meditation."[4] This etymology is common to nearly every Indian writer on the subject.[5] Bhāskararāya makes a further subtle distinction is his opening remarks on the LSN where he says:

> The difference between Mantra and Vidyā is that the former has reference to male deities and the latter to female ones. To show the identity of Śiva with Śakti, the word vidyā is...used along with the word mantra.[6]

The distinction here is one of gender, the feminine word vidyā being associated with female deities. But throughout his works Bhāskararāya, like other historical interpreters, refers to the śrīvidyā as a both a vidyā and a

mantra, the former term preferred for its philosophical suggestiveness as well as its gender.

Many traditions claim the superiority of particular mantras just as they do for their own chosen deity (iṣṭadevatā).[7] Bhāskararāya summarizes the position of the Śrīvidyā adepts most succinctly:

> 'Śrīvidyā is the best of mantras'...°He who regards as equal to the other [Vidyās] with the Vidyā of Lalitā, also this mantra with other mantras...that man is only bewildered in mind.[8]

B. Historical and Mythical Derivations of the Śrīvidyā

Śrīvidyā identifies itself not only through its practice of a distinctive principal mantra (mūlamantra) but as a tradition interpreting all aspects of mantraśāstra. Śrīvidyā adepts both historically and in contemporary practice have achieved notoriety beyond the sectarian boundaries of Śāktism for their knowledge of these esoteric matters.[9] The ability to use, interpret and distribute mantras has made Śrīvidyā adepts important religious functionaries in the wider Hindu religious society. It is not uncommon, for example, for contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts to initiate individuals seeking worldly or spiritual guidance into all sorts of mantras and practices other than those distinctive to Śrīvidyā tradition. As a result of their mantra expertise, they have also achieved a reputation for astrology, clairvoyance and even miraculous power, all

related to their ability to handle mantras and especially the "*vidyā* of *vidyās*, the *śrīvidyā*."[10] Contemporary adepts usually trace their general mantra knowledge to their Śrīvidyā practice. As one put it:

> When a person has accomplishment (*siddhi*) in Śrīvidyā, then all matters become *under* his control. This enables him to help others. His *siddhi* in other mantras and practices is merely a *by-product* of his mastery of the *śrīvidyā* that comes through the grace of Devī and *the guru*.[11]

It is the mantra of the goddess known as *pañcadaśākṣarī* or *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*, respectively "fifteen-" or "sixteen syllables" that is the principal or root-mantra (*mūlamantra*) and the center of Śrīvidyā's contemplative, yogic and ritual practices. The tradition debates the superiority of the sixteen syllable form over the fifteen as well as how the mantra is shaped within different lineages. The distinction between the fifteen and sixteen syllable configurations is best understood distinct from the traditions maintaining different versions of the mantra itself. While the debate over the fifteen and sixteen syllable forms is complex, the *śrīvidyā*'s variations according to different lineage traditions are comparatively simple.

Śrīvidyā tradition purports to have twelve different versions of the root-mantra each associated with one of twelve sages or demi-gods who brought it into the earthly

realm. This mythological, or perhaps even quasi-historical, account is consistent in its enumeration of the "revealing" figures and their versions of the mantra. The most complete exposition of the śrīvidyā's twelve versions is in the Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad though this is not the only one.[12] LSN, n.238 (manuvidyā), is the name which prompts Bhāskararāya to list the twelve. He remarks:

> The Śrīvidyā is of twelve kinds differentiated according to the twelve devotees, "Manu, Candra, Kubera, Lopamudrā, Manmatha, Agastya, Agni, Sūrya, Indra, Skanda, Śiva and Krodhabhaṭṭāraka [Durvāsa]. These are the devotees of Devī."[13]

Of these twelve forms of the mantra only two appear to have a major historical role in the tradition, the other ten do not appear to have been part of actual transmissions.

Historically, the most important version of the mantra is attributed to the aspect of Śiva called Manmatha and more frequently referred to as Kāmeśvara. The other version of the mantra with an historical, practical base is attributed to Lopamudrā, wife of the sage Agastya (himself attributed one of the vidyās), and a major interlocutor in Śrīvidyā tradition, especially in the transmission of the LSN.[14] The historical position of the other ten vidyās and figures is difficult to evaluate. With only theoretical discussions of these ten mantras available and no practical ritual guides we may assume that they were devised as theoretical links

within the mythological and theological structure of the tradition developed to give a role to figures deemed particularly important in Śrīvidyā's transmission.

The twelve "original" teachers may perhaps be a series of references to the earliest lineages associated with Śrīvidyā's transmission. Contemporary adepts maintain that all twelve versions of the single mantra were, in fact, once practiced and that for various reasons the lines of transmission in all but two of the lineages were broken.[15] This opinion meets with only marginal support in historical sources. Yoginīhṛdaya 2.14 says that the mantra has come through an uninterrupted succession of teachers from Śiva to the present. Amṛtānanda, like other commentators, emphasizes that the mantra is efficacious only when transmitted in a traceable lineage (paramparā).[16] Umānandanātha has provided a list of teachers for each of the two popular mantras, lineages that presumably carry their transmission into his own day.[17]

Historical commentators have not labored over the ten obscure forms, maintaining only the tradition of mentioning them in the discussion of the "original" mantra traditions. It seems that the differences in mantra configuration were meant to suggest different theories and practices followed within each lineage, but this too has become obscured. If ever there was such a series of lineages with distinctive

traits they have long since perished. Historical evidence suggests that ten of the twelve lineages have only the name of the teacher and the mantra by which to identify themselves.

C. Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā: kādi and hādi vidyās

Only in the case of the Manmatha/Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā vidyās is there any indication that distinctive traditions accompany the different configurations of the mantra. In the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras attributed to Gauḍapāda, the author proffers an explanation of the emergence of the two vidyās without mentioning the remaining ten. He says that Devī after creating the universe and the gods took the form of the goddess to establish Dharma. She next took the form of the sages to increase knowledge when in the middle of the ocean of jewels arose Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā who established Śrīvidyā lineages.[18] But in either case the goddess herself is identical to the śrīvidyā which is the nameless consciousness (cit) that pervades reality.[19] The Śrīvidyāratnasūtras are only one example of Śrīvidyā authors slanting their discussions towards the two mantra traditions that have an historical impact.

The distinction between the fifteen and sixteen syllable mantras is best viewed in the specific contexts of the two prominent traditions of transmission, the Kāmeśvara

vidyā and the Lopamudrā vidyā. The fifteen syllable pañcadaśī or pañcadaśākṣarī is the basis for the sixteen syllable ṣoḍaśī or ṣoḍaśākṣarī and the latter should be considered only in light of its being a variation of the former.

The śrīvidyā in fifteen or sixteen syllables and in any of the twelve configurations of the sages is universally acknowledged to be the subtle (sūkṣma) form of the goddess and the second corner of Śrīvidyā's triadic theology. Bhāskararāya echoes the views of earlier commentators when he says:

> Thus there are three forms of Devī, which partake of both the prakāśa and vimarśa aspects, namely the physical (sthūla), the subtle (sūkṣma), and the supreme (parā); the physical form has hands, feet, etc.; the subtle consists of mantra and the supreme is the vāsanā...The subtle form again is threefold...[20]

Rāmesvara Sūri commenting on PKS, 1.11 extends the identification of the physical deity with the subtle mantra to the guru which he says is also not different than the subtle body (sūkṣmaśarīra).[21] Amṛtānanda adds that it is the repetition of the mantra when identified with the Supreme Goddess that defines contemplative worship (upāsana).[22]

The vidyā of Kāmeśvara, frequently called Kāmarāja vidyā, is the version of the pañcadaśākṣarī given the most detailed scrutiny in Śrīvidyā sources. Its traditions

dominate discussions of mantric interpretation and its form is the focus of ritual in all known handbooks (paddhatis or nibandhas).[23] Kāmarāja vidyā is best known by the shortened designation kādi, meaning "beginning with ka", and is identified with the tradition of the kādimata school discussed in Śrīvidyā's earliest written sources. Lopamudrā's vidyā is called hādi, "beginning with ha", and counts among its adherents Puṇyānanda and his disciple Amṛtānanda. Though it is called the hādimata, the "hādi school", its doctrinal differences with kādi are never clearly articulated. One is led to conclude that the kādi/hādi distinction is based entirely on mantra configurations rather than on theological or speculative issues.

The Kāmarāja pañcadaśākṣarī is the one form of the śrīvidyā about which there appears little or no controversy, the form of hādividyā being a less settled issue. Kādi, unlike hādi which has a number of variations, conforms literally to the fifteen syllable prescription and is quite possibly the original form from which the other twelve formulations are derived. This at least appears to be the historical situation and is supported by contemporary adepts. Even the historically attested Lopamudrā hādividyā is most frequently viewed as a derivative form of kādi and takes second place in the majority of presentations.[24]

D. The Śrīvidyā, Śākta Speculations and Triadic Symbolism

Kādi is in three parts described as peaks (kūṭas), each viewed as a separate portion of the mantra. These are the vāgbhavakūṭa or peak that is the nature (bhava) of speech (vāk), the kāmarājakūṭa or peak of Kāmarāja (literally, King of Desire) and the śaktikūṭa or peak of Śakti. Kādi pañcadaśākṣarī thus literally is:

Vāgbhavakūṭa: **ka e ī la hrīṃ**

Kāmarājakūṭa: **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ**

Śaktikūṭa: **sa ka la hrīṃ**

The tripartite configuration of the mantra is another example of Śrīvidyā's penchant for triadic symbols. Following the general Hindu pattern, to the three components is frequently added a fourth, comparable to the addition of mokṣa to the puruṣārthas or "the fourth" (turīya) to the waking, dreaming and sleeping states. Each kūṭa of the mantra then is respectively associated with each element in the symbolic triads. Identical associations apply to the hādividyā's configuration in three kūṭas. Thus the mantra is a key component in the description of creation and has a prominent role in the general cosmological definition of reality. But unlike other symbols or imagery it is more than descriptive or symbolic.

The mantra in its subtle, pre-articulated forms is an actual part of the creative process and even when manifested as ordinary sound is not considered merely a description of creation: the mantra is the sound (*śabda*) from which the universe itself emanates. It is also more than a theoretical symbol of Śākta cosmology since it plays an active role in spiritual discipline (*sādhana*). The mantra is the focus of contemplative worship (*upāsana*); its repetition (*japa*) is classified hierarchically as silent, self-audible or openly verbalized.[25]

The chart below outlines the theoretical and descriptive associations of the three *kūṭas*. Each set of triads can be interpreted as corresponding to the three aspects of the human personality, that is, through body, speech and mind.[26] For example, the identification of the *śrīvidyā* with the *praṇava* involves its being located within the body, verbally articulated, and mentally contemplated as the source of creation. Bhāskararāya in his *Varivasyarahasya* or "Secret of Worship" observes that the three *kūṭas* of the *śrīvidyā* are like the beads of a garland, one naturally flowing into the next.[27]

Mantra *kūṭas*:	Vāgbhava	Kāmarāja	Śakti	Fourth
Praṇava:	a	u	m	
Stage of Sound:	Paśyantī	Madhyamā	Vaikharī	Parā
Goddess:	Vama	Jyeṣṭhā	Raudrī	Ambikā
Aspect of Śakti:	Icchā	Jñāna	Kriyā	Parā
Yogic Center:	Mūlādhara	Svadhiṣṭhāna	Anāhata	Manipura

[Or:	Anāhata	Ajña	Lālatamādhya]
Cosmos:	Agni (fire)	Sūrya (sun)	Soma (moon)
Consort:	Brahma	Viṣṇu	Śiva Brahman
Lalitā's form:	Head	Body	Lower Extremities

The universe is envisioned in Śrīvidyā's theistic monism as an emanation from a single source identified with the Brahman of Upanisadic speculation. This Brahman manifests as primordial sound (vāc) which gradually becomes articulated and physical. According to Tantric speculation, the One becomes many by devolving its own spiritual and material substance. Stated in the traditional theological terms of Śāktism, the union of Śiva and Śakti is at once both a perfect unity and the beginnings of the dualistic universe. At the moment of creation the cosmos emerges from the state of pure illumination (prakāśa), that is from Brahman identified theologically with Śiva. The One becomes two by inherently propelling (sphurattā) itself into a state of reflective consciousness (vimarśa).[28] It is Śiva, the illuminative (prakāśa), reflecting upon his own individuality that is called Śakti, the reflection (vimarśa). In this act of reflection the universe in its dualistic sense begins to emerge from Śiva's own being.[29] The One becomes two to enjoy the bliss of union---a union symbolized in the sexual embrace of Śiva and Śakti. From this point forward Śiva, while the original source of being, becomes a secondary figure in Śākta cosmology. Śakti is the

active, manifest, and creative component of the universe and, in effect, subsumes the role of Śiva.

In as much as he is the purely illuminative (prakāśa), Śiva is identified as Brahman and is the goal of spiritual realization. It is as reflected consciousness (vimarśa) that the One Brahman takes the form of the Self (ātman) each individual. The ātman is thus identified with Śakti. These cosmological events are paralleled also in the human consciousness: the true identity of the inner Self (ātman) with Brahman is the union of the reflective cognition (vimarśa) of the "I" with the source of its being, the pure consciousness (cit) of the illuminating (prakāśa) Brahman. For Śāktas dualistic consciousness emerges from the subject's emerging self-awareness when engaging the objective world: it is the concept of the Self's awareness as such that explains why Śakti is the primary focus of the Śākta's attentions. By discriminating the mere accretions of self-reflection from their source in the Self (ātman), the adepts realizes that the remainder is identical to Śakti in her pure reflective state (vimarśa). Completing the process of identification, the adept concludes that this reflection (vimarśa) without dualistic connotations is none other than the purely illuminative (prakāśa) Brahman with the anthropomorphic form of Śiva. Identifying his own Self (ātman) with Śakti, the Śākta

Tantric adept returns to the original state in which Śakti as reflection (vimarśa) first enjoyed the bliss (ānanda) of union with Brahman in the form of the purely illuminative (prakāśa) Śiva. Thus if creation is viewed as an evolution of One into many, then the process of realizing that creative event is a devolution, that is, a process of returning to the original unity of Śiva and Śakti. This "return" is achieved through ritual contemplation, yoga and devotion directed towards obtaining the liberating knowledge of the identity of Śiva and Śakti.

To Śāktas the focus of practical worship falls on the goddess because she is the source of the individual Self's own self-cognitive reflection as an "I". She thus provides the initial access to the source of cognitive reflection.

The first manifest form of Śakti's reflection (vimarśa) in the creative act is the mantra, which is nothing other than Self's incipient act of self reflection. The stages of devolution from the One source are identified with the śrīvidyā. At the first level of symbolic identification the śrīvidyā is linked to the primary mantric sources within Vedic tradition, that is, the praṇava and the Ṛg Vedic gāyatrī. These phonic sources of Brahman parallel the material world as it devolves from four stages of sound, beginning with the transcendent (parā) śabdabrahman. The mantra finally emerges into the physical form of ordinary

speech (vaikharī) after having passed through the body's subtle yogic centers. Each stage of speech is associated with the goddess in a particular aspect (as shown above in the chart) and each of these corresponds to her creative forces of desire (icchā), knowledge (jñāna) and action (kriyā). With each of these divine aspects of the Supreme Śakti is identified the corresponding male deity and their respective powers. In the final analysis the goddess emerges supreme in the form designated Ambikā. She is identical to Śiva (Brahman) and at the same time in the process of revealing herself.

The general pattern of these speculations, identifying a mantra such as the śrīvidyā with the devolving cosmos, is common to all Śāktas, if not to all Tantrics. Śrīvidyā tradition has merely given its own mantra a context within this general pattern of belief. The elegance of the Śrīvidyā system, however, is apparent only when the associations of the mantra with the śrīcakra are brought into picture. (These will be made more elaborate when the discussion turns directly to the cakra.) The fundamental macrocosmic/microcosm symbolism identifies the śrīcakra with the universe and the human body and thus the associations between mantra and cakra, and those between the three kūṭas of the mantra and the śrīcakra's nine sub-cakras (identified with the nine "gates" of the body), are at least

superficially apparent. The mantra's three kūṭas correspond to three sets of sub-cakras and to the sides of the triangle at the center of the śrīcakra. Each set of syllables in the mantra is also identified with one of the six yogic centers in the body (to which three more are added) and these, respectively, with the sub-cakras of the śrīcakra.

The śrīvidyā is an expression of primordial sound (vāk or śabda), though it is not merely one of the phonic emanations parallelling the material world but the form from which the whole of creation has evolved.[30] Tradition maintains it shares the identical features of auṃ, the Vedic praṇava. Śrīvidyā sources develop Vedic speculations by simply transferring the meanings of auṃ onto the śrīvidyā.[31] As the above chart shows, the three kūṭas correspond to the three constituents of auṃ (a-u-ṃ).

Contemporary adepts frequently explain the śrīvidyā in its three parts in terms of Gaudapada's discussion of auṃ as tripartite in the Māṇḍukhyakārikās.[32] The contemporary popularity of the Sankara tradition and its links to Śrīvidyā adepts make allusions to Gauḍapāda appear all the more germane to interpretations of triadic symbolism. In effect, whatever is said about auṃ either as a triadic symbol or as the primordial emanation (cf., Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 1, 4; 9, 23,2) applies to the śrīvidyā by inference since the śrīvidyā is considered the praṇava's

hidden form.[33] The explanation of the *śrīvidyā* as tripartite is a reflection of its "explicit" relationship with the *praṇava*.

E. The *śrīvidyā*, Vedic gāyatrī and Vedic traditions

Far more attention is paid both in historical and contemporary sources to the identification of the *śrīvidyā* with the *gāyatrī* of *Ṛg Veda*, 3.62.10. This most sacred of Vedic utterances is said by Bhaskararaya to have two forms, one explicit (*spaṣṭham*), the other deeply concealed (*gopanīyataram*).[34] Like the *praṇava*, the *gāyatrī* too is identical with Brahman. According to Bhāskararāya it is the *Tripurā Upaniṣad* that gives the secret meaning of the *gāyatrī*.[35] Each of the *śrīvidyā*'s three *kūṭas*, Bhāskararāya explains, is itself a microcosm of the esoteric *gāyatrī*.

The Ṛg Vedic *gāyatrī* mantra reads in Sanskrit: **tát savitúr várenyaṃ bhárgo devásya dhīmahi dhíyo yó naḥ pracodáyāt.** Its explicit formulation would appear to have nothing to do with the fifteen syllables of *śrīvidyā*; and unlike the *śrīvidyā* it expresses a clear meaning at the level of ordinary language. It may be translated: "Let us contemplate the lovely splendor of [the god] Savitṛ that he may inspire our minds."

For the Tantric the *gāyatrī*'s literal meaning is perhaps its least important sense. While in the Tantras the

Vedic gāyatrī is variously interpreted, in Śrīvidyā it acquires a very specific significance. The majority of Śrīvidyā commentators still maintain that the utterance of the gāyatrī is restricted to members of the upper three estates (traivarṇikas) while qualification for the śrīvidyā, gāyatrī's esoteric form, is determined through a different set of values.[36] The key point is that qualification (adhikāra) for the mantra is no longer based on birth or gender.

The individual syllables of each kūṭa of the kādi śrīvidyā, Bhāskararāya points out, is actually a portion of the gāyatrī. The chart below shows the relationships:

Vāgbhavakūṭa

ka = tat = Kāmeśvara = Brahman
e = savitur vareṇyam = Kāmesvarī = (Śakti)
i = bhargo devasya dhī- = Śiva
la = mahi = Earth
hrīṃ = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt = Māyā

Kāmarājakūṭa

ha = tat
sa = savitur (Three syllables = Three Words of the Mantra)
ka = vareṇyam
ha = bhargo devasya dhī- (One syllable = Six Syllables)
la = mahi
hrim = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

Śaktikūṭa

sa = tat savitur vareṇyam
ka = bhargo devasya dhī-
la = mahi
hrim = dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt

The interpretation Bhāskararāya offers in VVR,

presented in the chart above, is actually based on the exposition given in the Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad (TTU).[37] Thus TTU, verses 7-15 explain the vāgbhavakūṭa as the gāyatrī. The first word, tat (that), is identified with the eternal Brahman, the One who comes forth as the manifest world filled with desires and hence is called Kāmeśvara, i.e., Śiva.[38] Verse nine links gāyatrī not only to the śrīvidyā but to the śrīcakra. The syllable la is understood as the earth (mahi) in the form of the goddess.[39] The five syllables of the vāgbhavakūṭa, it is said in conclusion to this section, are the five elements that make up material creation.[40] The interpretation of the kāmarājakūṭa, called in TTU the kāmakūṭa, is first given a fundamentally yogic perspective based on identification of portions of the gāyatrī with syllables of śrīvidyā "located" within the bodily cakras according to the six cakra theory of kuṇḍalinī yoga.[41] The kāmarājakūṭa further suggests the secrets of kāmakalā meditation on the female organ. The meanings of the term kāmakalā are directly associated with the six syllables of the kāmarājakūṭa. The third śaktikūṭa is identified with gāyatrī by linking portions of the mantra to the individual Self (ātman), Śiva (found again, as in the vāgbhavakūṭa, in the syllable ka) and Śakti (especially within the seed-syllable (bījākṣara) hrīṃ).

In the Jñānarṇava Tantra each of the śrīvidyā's three

kūṭas are identified with the acquisition of certain levels of empowerment; the accomplishment (siddhi) of the vāgbhavakūṭa is, as the name itself suggests, a mastery of speech; the kāmarājakūṭa gives splendor like that of Indra and the śaktikūṭa attracts the three worlds such that they cooperate with the wishes of the adept.[42]

Nowhere, however, does Bhāskararāya suggest that the daily repetition of the śrīvidyā exempts members of the twice-born castes from their obligation to recite the Vedic gāyatrī at the appropriate daily junctures (sandhyavandana). Rāmeśvara maintains the usual Tantric position that twice-born males must keep both Vedic and Tantric obligations regarding mantras and rituals even when they are parallel or seemingly repetitious. This position undergoes important changes in some contemporary interpretations in which repetitious Tantric practices are optional for twice-borns performing the parallel Vedic rites.[43] But as far as the twice-born Śrīvidyā initiates are concerned it is their duty to maintain both principal mantra obligations; they must recite both the Vedic gāyatrī and the śrīvidyā every day.

The most important parallel of Tantric and Vedic rites is seen in the specially designed mantric interpretations that Śrīvidyā matches with established Vedic traditions. These are developed not for the sake of posing an alternative to Vedic forms but to claim an esoteric Vedic

legacy. There is perhaps no more explicit symbol of Vedic mantra traditions than the Ṛg Veda's gāyatrī mantra---what Basham has called "the most holy passage of that most holy scripture."[44]

As it has already been noted, the literal semantic meaning of the Vedic gāyatrī is now far less important than its being a sacred sound conveying an esoteric meaning. As a ritual mantra it functions in many ways, for example to purify an individual (cf., Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, 28.10-25) and as a safeguard to life and lineage (cf., Gāyatrī Upaniṣad).[45] The predilection for esoteric interpretation is seen in both Tantric and non-Tantric sources.[46] The key issue remains the power of the mantra as a particular set of sounds: when uttered according to prescription these sacred sounds project influence over nature, human events and even the supernatural, including the gods.[47] Tantrics add to these by not only making semantic meanings secondary but by effectively sublating them in favor of the view that mantras are the articulated form of material and spiritual reality. The use of apparently meaningless particles is, of course, not unknown in ancient Vedic sources; particles such as svāhā serve important functions in ritual formulations but have no literal, semantic meaning. Tantrism harkens back to this Vedic notion by deeming the sounds themselves efficacious and takes the concept further by considering

mantras with semantic sense to be "lower" than mantras constructed solely of seemingly meaningless seed-syllables. The Vedic gāyatrī is a more explicit form of the mantric reality (and hence a "lower form") than the śrīvidyā not merely because it is the best known expression of the Ṛg Veda but because it continues to convey meaning at the level of speech. In Śrīvidyā tradition the gāyatrī does not gain a deeper esoteric significance until it is interpreted as the explicit form of the śrīvidyā. The śrīvidyā, however, without any semantic meaning is interpreted only in terms of an esoteric meaning. As one Śrīvidyā adept put it:

> Because it is purely seed-syllables [bijākṣaras], śrīvidyā is the purest form of mantra. It does not make a request or praise the god, it is God's purest expression. Gāyatrī is great but it cannot match śrīvidyā because it is still in language; it is Veda and mantra but when transformed into the śrīvidyā its greatness increases.[48]

Śrīvidyā tradition also goes beyond the usual ritual definitions of the Vedic gāyatrī. Whereas the explicit Vedic form is an obligation (nityakarma) based "merely" on caste, the esoteric gāyatrī, the śrīvidyā, requires a more elite qualification since it is not linked to birth but to spiritual disposition (adhikāra). The privileged status of the gāyatrī limited to traivarṇika caste males is made subordinate to a new set of qualifications for initiation into śrīvidyā. The caste and gender restrictions

surrounding the explicit gāyatrī are not rejected per se but considered to be of less consequence to the spiritually adept. Caste is not rejected but sublated in favor of the "higher" Tantric values.[49]

The śrīvidyā too involves obligatory rites (nityakarma) in the sense that the initiated are required to perform certain daily rituals in which it is the centerpiece; but its rewards, like its initiation, are reserved for the privileged initiate. The Vedic gāyatrī, however, has not diminished in status in most contemporary south Indian lineages though its importance within Śrīvidyā sādhana is a subject of much debate and controversy.

Śrīvidyā has also interpreted its mantra as part of Vedic tradition in other ways. Bhāskararāya says that the appearance of the śrīvidyā in a concealed form in the Tripurā Upaniṣad is proof of its being part of Vedic revelation (śrūti). There is no doubt, at least in his mind (and in the minds of the majority of contemporary adepts) that this text is an ancient Vedic source.[50] The mantra's presentation in the Upaniṣad is not the only esoteric formulation in the Vedic śrūti, nor is it necessarily the most ancient since Śrīvidyā tradition also identifies the mantra with a passage of the Ṛg Veda. The passage is Ṛg Veda, 5.47.4, **catvāra īṃ bibharti kṣemayantaḥ**, which literally translates: "the four [priests], desiring benefit

for themselves, worship [this god]".[51] Bhāskararāya gives the standard Śrīvidyā interpretation of the verse when he says it means "that which contains the four īṃs confers benefit."[52] The four īṃs refer to the four occurrences of the letter ī in the kādi pañcadaśākṣarī, that is, the ī vowel in the first kūṭa and the three ī vowels occurring within the syllable hrīṃ at the end of each kūṭa. This interpretation thus indirectly asserts the "originality" of the kādi form of pañcadaśākṣarī since no other fifteen syllable configuration (including the hādi) contains four long ī vowels.

It is the ṣoḍaśī or sixteen syllable version of the kādi mantra which, according to some oral traditions, provides in its sixteenth syllable, the fourth ī. Ṣoḍaśī or ṣoḍaśākṣarī, according to some adepts, is formed by adding the seed-syllable (bījākṣara) śrīṃ to the end of the fifteen syllable kādi pañcadaśī. This sixteenth syllable is so secret, it is maintained, that it is not ordinarily discussed explicitly even in privately circulated texts. Thus according to this interpretation, the first ī vowel occurring in the vāgbhavakūṭa (that is, the ī not part of the bījākṣara hrīṃ) is not the first ī referred to in the Vedic verse. The three ī's of hrīṃ are coupled with the ī of the seed-syllable śrīṃ to complete the pattern of **catvāra īṃ**.[53] The effort to derive all the four ī's from the hrīms

rather than accepting the ī of the vāgbhavakūṭa is due to the esoteric significance of īm itself which is said to be the equivalent to the secret kāmakalā.[54] This particular formation of the ṣoḍaśī, however, in which śrīṃ is taken to be the sixteenth syllable is not without controversy. Some maintain that the addition of śrīṃ is not the "great ṣoḍaśī" (mahāṣoḍaśī) but merely the "abbreviated ṣoḍaśī" (laghuṣoḍaśī, literally the "light sixteen").

Śrīvidyā interprets its root mantra as emerging within the Vedic tradition. But unlike Vedic mantras, Śrīvidyā tradition maintains, its mantras are not explicit (prakaṭa) but secret (rahasya), the meaning (or set of meanings) sometimes further concealed by attributing esoteric significance to the mantra's particular elements. While the majority of Śrīvidyā traditionalists express deference to the Vedas and locate their own tradition within the broader Vedic tradition, some adepts hold that explicit forms of Vedic revelation are not particularly suitable to the expeditious path of Tantric sādhana. The alternative Tantric interpretation however is kept a strict secret because of its inherent danger to the uninitiated. PKS, 1.30 delivers what might be deemed the final word on the explicit forms of Vedic revelation:

> Like a prostitute the mantras [or teachings, vidyā] of the Vedas and other [teachings] are

explicit. Among all views this [Śrīvidyā] is [most] secret.[55]

Rāmeśvara further explains that Vedic teaching can be obtained for a price while Śrīvidyā can only be a gift of the guru's grace; the vidyā that leads to the realization of Brahman (brahmavidyā), he says, is not available even for gold.[56] Rāmeśvara does not, however, make these remarks at the further expense of the Vedic tradition, preferring to emphasize the role of initiation and the need for an authentic teacher. This point should be clear: even the seemingly admonishing remarks about Vedic tradition in Śrīvidyā sources are made in order to conclude that their own revelations, especially mantric revelations, are superior because they are the Veda's esoteric meaning. Śrīvidyā does not reject the authority of Vedic injunctions but rather places them on a subordinate level. Among Tantrics, Śrīvidyā traditionalists are rarely seen lashing out at Vedic orthodoxy and the PKS offers an unusual example of a tendency not uncommon in other Tantric traditions. Modern adepts, for example, compare the statement in the PKS to Kṛṣṇa's rather critical view of Brahmins and Vedic practices in the Bhagavadgītā; they say that Kṛṣṇa does not repudiate Vedic tradition but interprets within its boundaries. Likewise, they assert, that their positions do not constitute a rejection of the Vedas but rather a richer and, indeed, a secret interpretation of them. In

contemporary south India, Śrīvidyā exhibits strong conservative tendencies that may not, in fact, reflect the pan-Indian historical tradition. Southern culture and the predominant Brahmin influence suggest that the tradition's regional character has been shaped in ways that more readily conform to the expectations of upper and middle class, conservative Brahminism. In certain striking instances, however, important southern figures such as Bhāskararāya deviate from these conservative patterns and still retain their popularity among contemporary conservative interpreters.

F. Esoteric Meanings of the śrīvidyā

The syllables of the śrīvidyā have not only a collective symbolism but individual esoteric meanings. These points are elaborated in the Yoginīhṛdaya and in Bhāskararāya's Varivasyarahasya. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the breadth of interpretation and the impact such speculation has had on mantric initiation and practice.

Each syllable of the pañcadaśī is associated with at least one particular deity and sometimes several. These deities are considered subordinate aspects of Lalitā and reflect certain qualities or attributes of her nature.57 The bījākṣara hrīṃ, occurring three times in the kādi and

hādi śrīvidyā, attracts the most attention. When taken separately it represents the goddess of the earth, Bhuvaneśvarī, also regarded in the broader Śākta tradition as one of the ten great goddesses (daśadevatā).[58] Placed within the śrīvidyā it acquires an additional set of meanings and is the subject of elaborate esoteric interpretation. Bhāskararāya, for example, interprets hrīṃ as twelve distinctive elements each with a significance the interpretation of the entire śrīvidyā.[59] Since hrīṃ is composed of four constituents each of these is also liable to interpretation. The vowel ī, for example, has manifold symbolism; it is source of the primordial sound (nāda) that creates the first three sub-cakras of the śrīcakra at the moment of creation. It is responsible for and representative of a portion of the creation of the universe. It is also the cause of dreaming consciousness in which the four components making up the individual consciousness (the inner organ (antaḥkāraṇa) composed of the manas, buddhi, ahaṃkāra and citta) operate.[60] The r of hrīṃ, to cite another example, is the cause of the illuminative form (prakāśarūpa) characterizing the waking state of consciousness while m is the cause of deep sleep.[61]

The esoteric explanation of the śrīvidyā's syllables serves a larger purpose in the symbolic scheme. It links the broad cosmological patterns of creation to yogic

concepts and practices and is the means through which the Self (ātman) within the body, a microcosm of the śrīcakra, is identified with the śrīcakra as Brahman in the subtle form (sūksmarūpa) of sound (śabda). For each sound in the mantra or element within the bījāksara there is a series of identifications with different parts of the universe in its subtle and parallel physical forms. Each of these correspond to aspects of human consciousness and parts of the body. They are then identified with the emergence of the universe in the form of the śrīcakra.

The Śrīvidyā adept internalizes the esoteric meanings of the mantra during the period leading to and following initiation. It is not as if with each recitation of the mantra the adept contemplates the meaning of the mantra's individual syllables. It is rather that the meaning of the syllables contribute to the efficacy of the mantra's recitation: when an adept recites the mantra he or she brings the cumulative sense of its power beyond its being a sound configuration that subtly parallels the essence of the material world. Out of these interpretations so long studied and contemplated, the adept adds another dimension to the mantra's power. The repetition of the mantra itself in light of these interpretive studies is considered the direct experience of Brahman. Without imbibing the mantra's meaning in all its complexity its recital is deemed

useless. As Bhāskararāya says:

> The utterance of sound without a knowledge of the [true] import bears no fruit, [even as] the offering thrown over ashes in the absence of fire does not burst into flame. Those who are merely reciting the different sounds without a knowledge of their meaning may be compared to the donkey carrying a load of sandlewood.[62]

The Śrīvidyā is also given six traditional meanings (arthas). These are unquestionably the mantra's most widely circulated interpretations since they apply to all its variations. Their exposition in the Yoginīhṛdaya places them in a source common to all Śrīvidyā adepts. Bhāskararāya's explanation in the VVR, though based on a kādi interpretation, is far more straightforward than that of the VT. The first of the six meanings he explains thus:

> The Supreme Goddess (Parādevatā) who is the aggregate of the seven Śakti-s, Vāma, etc. and is the embodiment of the thirty-six Tattva-s does not differ from this Mantra [even by the smallest measure].
> The letter **a** and the letter **Ha** which are identical with Śiva and Śakti, which are devoid of form, which embrace each other and which pulsate and shine, are [no other than] the Supreme Brahman mentioned in the Upanisad-s.
> These two are manifest in the Mantra itself as the first [letter] of the last Group and the fourth [letter] of the middle Group. Hence, the identity of the Goddess, the Mantra, and the universe is established as **bhavārtha.**[63]

Bhavārtha here refers to the "existential meaning", that is, to the existential identity of the mantra's sounds with ultimate reality.

The sampradāyārtha or "traditional meaning", the second of the mantra's meanings, identifies the syllables collectively with the five physical elements and the thirty-six tattvas or categories that make up reality.[64] The result according to Bhāskararāya:

> As there is no difference between the cause and its effect, between the thing signified (vācya) and the word which signifies the thing (vācaka), and between the Brahman and the universe, so also the universe and this Vidyā are identical [in relation to each other]. This is the Sampradāyārtha.[65]

The third or "hidden meaning" (nirgarbhārtha) is explained as the identity of the individual's Self (ātman), the guru and Śiva while the fourth kaulikārtha (the "meaning according to the Kula") sets forth the identity of Self, guru and goddess.[66] This fourth meaning also includes the identification of the mantra with the planets, the asterisms (nakṣatra), the senses and their respective objects and the material (prakṛti) and spiritual world (puruṣa).[67] Bhāskararāya's descriptive analysis identifies all these elements with the śrīcakra's sub-cakras and defines the source of their truth as the guru. Summarizing, Bhāskararāya says:

> In this manner the identity of the Mother, the Vidyā, the Cakra, the Guru and the [pupil's own] self [is patent]. This is the Kaulikārtha of the Mantra.[68]

The fifth or "secret meaning" (rahasyārtha) identifies

the mantra with the yogic centers of the body and completes the pattern of microcosmic/macrocosmic symbolism by linking the human form to the universal forms set forth in the previous four arthas. With the comprehension of each meaning a new level of realization is achieved, the sixth and final level expressing the "meaning of ultimate reality" (mahātattvārtha). At this final level all previous forms of dualistic subject/object identification are transcended.

By re-envisioning the process of creation in the śrīcakra and by enacting its creative sounds, the Śrīvidyā adept draws a map, as it were, that leads back to the original state of dissolution. While the mantra is identified with the human body and the śrīcakra the process is completed only in the contemplative experience of these six interconnected meanings. In the final analysis Bhāskararāya concludes:

> Unapproachable by word or mind and other senses, transcending the [thirty-six] Tattva-s, bigger than the biggest and smaller than the smallest, with a place loftier than the skies, identical with the universe, assuming the [subtle] forms of Consciousness (cit) and Bliss (ānanda): [such is Brahman] and therein should one concentrate his self with a view to attaining identity...[69]

The śrīvidyā's meanings are the basis for interpreting the symbols on the map of creation: in comprehending the mantra the adept no longer views material reality and its subtle sound counterparts as distinct or parallel entities

but as two perspectives of the same reality. The mantric level of being is realized to be the source of reality, physical or mental, and not merely its parallel or the means for achieving unity with it.

Each of the fifteen syllables of the kādividyā are also given esoteric etymologies common to many Tantric sources. Each syllable is viewed as a derivative of a particular Sanskrit verbal root and interpreted in accordance with the verb's meaning. Bhāskararāya, like other Tantric commentators, was obviously aware that most of these etymologies were not founded on grammatical grounds but nevertheless was not deterred from using etymology to develop esoteric meanings.

While in his description of the śrīvidyā's syllables there is a logic to the fanciful derivation of verbal roots, there is no grammatical basis for deriving a particular syllable from a given verbal root. As the chart below shows, the syllables which repeat may or may not be derived from the same verbal root and several syllables (or parts of the bījākṣara hrīṃ) are not given any verbal derivative. Interpreting the kādividyā, Bhāskararāya providesthe following esoteric meanings to the individual elements of the śrīvidyā:

Syllable	Derivative Verbal Root	Esoteric Meaning
Vāgbhavakūṭa		
ka	√**kan**, to shine	Śiva, the Illuminator
e	√**in**, to study	Instrument of learning, i.e.,the buddhi
[**ka** + **e** indicates the luminous intellect]		
ī	√**ī**, to pervade	Pervading all reality
la + **ha** + **ri** =		Predominance
ṃ		Cause of Predominance
Kāmarājakūṭa		
ha	√**han**, to injure	Valor, **ha** is the cause of vanquishing the enemy
sa	√**so**, to enjoy √**su**, to procreate	Wealth, an aid to enjoyment
ka	√**kam**, to desire	Women, who are attracted by the mantra and who are the objects of desire
ha	√**oharn**, to go	Refers to achievement of valor, wealth, desire, etc.
la + **ha** + **ri**	√**i**, to shine	Fame
m		
Śaktikūṭa		
sa ka la		Are that by which the above actions are brought about
hṛ	√**hṛ**, to remove	The destroyer of the universe
i		Radiance, the cause of Creation and Preservation
[**hṛ** + **i** = the Mother who shines in the heart and dispels pain, **hri** is a dependent determinative compound (<u>karmadharya</u>) with **ṃ**]		
ṃ		Primal sound (<u>nāda</u>) or knowledge

This compounded meaning (samastārtha), Bhāskararāya says, is so called because it involves compounding several words, attributing to the mantra the accomplishment of all human desires and providing an essential meaning for the vidyā in an abridged form.[70]

G. The śrīvidyā Appended to Other Mantras

The śrīvidyā is also appended to other mantras and, most notably, to a gāyatrī form devised for Tripurā. Tantric sources have created forms of gāyatrī mantras by substituting terms within the basic skeletal pattern of the Vedic gāyatrī. These are especially popular in the worship of localized forms of the goddess. For example, Śivakāmasundarī, the consort of Cidambaram Naṭarāja, has a gāyatrī mantra that follows this pattern. It reads: **devadaveśī vidhmahe śivakāmeśī dhimahi tannasśiva pracodayāt.**[71] PKS offers a form of Tripurā gāyatrī mantra that is to be recited with the śrīvidyā.[72] According to the prescription Tripurā's gāyatrī is interspersed with the śrīvidyā and reads: (1) [vāgbhavakūṭa] **ka e ī la hrīṃ tripurasundarī vidhmahe** (2) [kāmarājakuṭa] **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ pitakāmani dhimahi** (3) [śaktikūṭa] **sa ka la hrīṃ tannaḥ klinna pracodayāt.** While meditating on this mantra Rāmeśvara explains that the adept is to imagine the śrīcakra on the disk of the sun. This links the original relationship of Vedic gāyatrī's Savitṛ with Tripurā. In

contemporary practice this prescription in PKS is out of vogue and while several adepts knew of its textual reference, none practiced it. Other mantras appended to the śrīvidyā do not appear to have comparable textual sources. These are discussed in the contexts of the living tradition's oral transmissions in Part Two.

H. Tripurā Upaniṣad, Hādi and Kādi Vidyās

Unlike the Tripurātāpinī which compares śrīvidyā to gāyatrī and discusses the twelve mantra configurations before turning its attentions to the śrīcakra, the Tripurā Upaniṣad considers only two forms of the mantra, kādi and hādi. In Tripurā Upaniṣad, verses eight and nine, each syllable of the mantra is disclosed through a technical, encoded vocabulary. As Bhāskararāya remarks, "Because this mantra is deeply secret it should be learned only from the guru."[73] The primary or explicit meanings of the words in these Upaniṣadic verses give no indication of their actual esoteric sense. Bhāskararāya begins by pointing out that this particular esoteric revelation is unlike the explicit form of revealing the gāyatrī. He says:

> In some places the gāyatrī [mantra], the Mother of the Vedas, is recited explicitly even though it is the same [from the esoteric point of view as the śrīvidyā].[74]

Translated literally verse eight of the Upaniṣad reads:

> Desire, womb, lotus, wielder of the thunderbolt, cave, ha[-]sa, the wind, cloud and Indra. Again cave, sa[-]ka[-]la and Māyā--this is the primordial mantra [or original knowledge, ādividyā], Mother of the Universe, the Ancient.

The only clue that the verse indicates the mantra is the ambiguous term ādividyā which can be taken either in the sense of "original mantra" or in the more literal sense of "original knowledge". Without the help of the commentators the esoteric meaning of the verse, which in this case is truly the only one that makes sense, would remain obscured: an entirely purposeful concealment designed to preserve the secrecy of the vidyā. The commentators, however, make it clear that each word in the verse represents one of the syllables of the kādi pañcadaśākṣarī.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Tripurā Upaniṣad's treatment of the śrīvidyā, however, is not its encoding vocabulary but that kādi vidyā is presented before hādi which is treated as a derivative. Bhāskararāya notes that Jñānārṇava Tantra regards these two forms of the śrīvidyā as superior over the other ten but concludes by saying, "because the kādividyā...has been described first, its priority (ādhikya) is suggested."[75] It would appear that kādimata tradition has been so dominant historically that hādimata despite having had such influential adherents as Puṇyānanda and Amṛtānanda was never regarded by the

majority as the equal to kādi. Bhāskararāya expresses mixed views on the subject, saying in one place that kādi is superior while in the Tripurā Upaniṣad commentary he remarks with characteristic tolerance that, "...since all vidyās are not different, a comparison of one to another is merely for the sake of praising [one and encouraging its performance]."[76] Contemporary Śrīvidyā traditionalists maintain that the kādi pañcadaśī is the ādividyā, that is, the "original mantra" and historical textual sources suggest that this is in fact the case.

The actual configuration of the hādividyā is not without controversy and some confusion. This would appear to offer further support for the belief that kādi was the original form of the mantra and that hādi, though it is historically attested and attracted several formidable thinkers, is a derivative. The form of hādi suggested in the Tripurā Upaniṣad is the fifteen syllable configuration. As verse nine says,

> [Replacing] the three root [syllables of each kūṭa of this [Kāmarāja kādividyā as described in the previous verse with the letters **ha**, **sa** and **ka** represented by the words] six, seven and fire (vahni, also meaning Śiva) they [i.e., the devotees come to] dwell [in the Lopamudrā hādividyā mantra].[77]

Thus hādividyā's configuration in fifteen syllables is:

Vāgbhavakūṭa: **ha sa ka la hrīṃ**

Kāmarājakūṭa: **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ**

Śaktikūṭa: **sa ka la hrīṃ**

In some versions, however, it is not merely the first three syllables of the first kūṭa that is replaced but the entire first kūṭa. The result is a sixteen syllable configuration in which the vāgbhavakūṭa is identical to the kāmarājakūṭa. Whether this sixteen syllable version is considered the ṣoḍaśī form within Lopamudrā tradition is not clear since the discussion of all forms of the ṣoḍaśī is almost entirely restricted to kādimata sources.

The doctrinal differences between kādi and hādi traditions are difficult to assess for two reasons. First is the absence of mention of clear differences in the works of noted hādi or kādi proponents. Written texts give no indication of differing theoretical concepts attributed to each mata apart from the different mantra configurations. One can only conclude that the two matas apparently did not differ in conduct (ācāra) or with regard to specific ritual practices or in the appropriateness of certain ritual elements, as was clearly the case between the Kaulas and Samayins. Lakṣmīdhara, who offers brief comments on certain theoretical kādi/hādi differences, is not supported by any other historical figure.[78] Thus it would appear that the matas differed only to the degree that each favored its own

form of the mantra and its contemplation (bhāvanā). The most remarkable point, however, is that no extant ritual manuals---neither historical or contemporary---give the hādividyā a primary role. Exactly what hādimata rituals included and how they were performed, especially in regard to the use of the śrīvidyā within the śrīcakra pūjā, is not known. The ritual paddhatis, the texts at the heart of the practical ritual traditions which use the śrīvidyā in various types of ritual performance other than in japa, do not mention hādividyā. In fact, there is no indication in any of the historical paddhatis that the ritual performed according to hādimata would entail a substitution of hādi each time kādi is used outside of japa. The paddhatis do not seem to make room for such an interpretation and the only place where hādi appears to be used in place of kādi is in the japa.

Contemporary traditions shed no light on this issue since there are neither hādimata texts nor living adepts to offer an explanation. Curiously, neither Puṇyānanda in KKV nor Amṛtānanda in his commentary on YH give any clue as to what, if any, ritual factors change with the substitution of hādi for kādi.[79] Despite their Kashmiri origins we cannot safely conclude that the practice of the hādividyā was strictly a Kashmiri or north Indian phenomenon even in light of the absence of a living hādimata tradition in the south.

Southern authors do not fail to mention the existence of both forms of the śrīvidyā and Bhāskararāya, a relatively recent figure, appears to acknowledge the practice of hādividyā in south India in his own day. The absence of historical and contemporary hādividyā adherents from the southern regions does leave open the possibility that it was essentially a Kashmiri or north Indian dominated practice; regarding its practice, however, we know little more than that it involved a transformation of the mantra's syllable configuration.

Qualification for each form of the śrīvidyā is sometimes associated with a predominance of either Śiva or Śakti in the individual personality. Contemporary oral traditions echo the views of the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras in which it is maintained that there are two dominant factors (tattvas) permeating reality, Śiva and Śakti; Śiva tattva is associated with Lopamudrā (i.e., hādividyā) while Śakti tattva is associated with Kāmarāja (kādividyā). Thus, according to the oral tradition, those more in need of the Śakti element receive the kādividyā and, since this is the majority of persons (how they make this determination is not clear), kādi is the more popular form of the mantra.[80] All Śrīvidyā traditionalists therefore locate themselves in either kādi or hādi lines and place their own teachers in a succession from the "original" gurus who learned the vidyā

from Śiva. Bhāskararāya notes that the lineages of Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā do indeed keep distinct meanings for the mantra (in its respective forms) but that these are only learned from the tradition and through a guru and "not from anything else".[81] Since there are, to my knowledge, no living traditions of the Lopamudrā lineage in south India it is no longer possible to elucidate these distinctions.

I. Ṣoḍaśākṣarī: The Sixteen Syllable Form of the Śrīvidyā

The ṣoḍaśī is mentioned in Śrīvidyā sources but rarely discussed in any detail. Bhāskararāya explains the emergence of this form of the mantra:

> This (ṣoḍaśī) sprung from the Mūlādhara of the great Mother, and proceeding through the stages of Parā, Paśyantī, etc. emerged from her mouth in the Vaikharī form; and it was transmitted from teacher to pupil.[82]

Apart from these remarks there are two others worth noting in the LSN; these identify the term ṣoḍaśī as the sixteen year old virginal Lalita and as the sixteenth hidden kalā of the moon that adjoins the usual fifteen phases (tithis) identified with the fifteen nityās.[83] The addition of a sixteenth kalā and corresponding nityā to the usual fifteen (identified with the moon's phases and placed on the innermost trikoṇa of the śrīcakra) is analogous to the addition of a fourth element to the sets triadic

symbols. It is a deliberate attempt to add another dimension to this established concept. The sixteenth element added to the śrīvidyā's fifteen syllable form plays the identical symbolic role as a fourth element added to a set of three. For example, regarding the symbolism of the fifteen nityās identified with the innermost trikoṇa of the śrīcakra and placed five to a side, the sixteenth, the higher and more subtle emanation, is placed on the bindu in the center. Thus the sixteenth nityā by its being identical to the symbol of absolute non-duality, the bindu, is outside the ordinary realm of the fifteen nityās identified on the central triangle. Like the fourth puruṣartha, mokṣa, or the fourth state (turya) in the description of consciousness as waking, dreaming and dreamless, the sixteenth element pushes beyond the realms of ordinary reality and is identified with the achievement of final goal of liberation. The sixteenth element of the set, like the fourth in a set of threes, subsumes and encompasses the others; rather than a simple contrast to the others, the final element envelopes and completes the symbolic pattern of meanings. This interpretation paralleling the sixteenth element of the śrīvidyā and the fourth element within triadic symbols is not uncommon among contemporary Śrīvidyā votaries.

It is not possible to determine whether the ṣoḍaśī is purely an historical, theological appendage to kādividyā.

There is only a cursory mention of the term ṣoḍaśī in Śrīvidyā sources and no indication of the structure of the mantra. The ṣoḍaśī's form as well as its symbolic structure draws little or no attention from Śrīvidyā's major historical commentators. Bhāskararāya mentions the ṣoḍaśī when the LSN cues a discussion but it is clear that for him the term mūlamantra is reserved for the kādividyā pañcadaśākṣarī.[84] He expresses little interest in the explanation of the ṣoḍaśī and leaves it out of his most elaborate mantra discussions in the Varivasyarahasya. There do not appear to be any explicit references to ṣoḍaśī in any of Bhāskararāya's works or in those of other major historical commentators including such extensive ritual elaborations as Śrīvidyānandanātha's Śrividyāratnākāra.

Ṣoḍaśī's adherents consider its secrecy one of the most significant aspects of its efficacy and the primary means of preserving its status. Oral transmission remains the basic method for elucidating ṣoḍaśī's structure. Its actual forms are mentioned only rarely in privately circulated ritual manuals with no attention given to its symbolic interpretation.

As it has already been noted, according to the kādimata, there are two forms of the ṣoḍaśī, the abbreviated or "light" (laghu) version and the so-called "great" (mahā) version. The laghuṣoḍaśī retains the literal sixteen

syllable configuration by adding the seed-syllable (bījākṣara) śrīṃ.[85] This form, however, has lost currency among contemporary south Indian adepts who favor the mahāṣoḍaśī. Mahāṣoḍaśī does not conform literally to the sixteen syllable structure but rather adds two (or three) sets of syllables which, according to contemporary adepts, are counted as a single unit. Instead of three kūṭas the mantra is usually structured into six units:

(1) **oṃ śrīṃ hrīṃ klīṃ aiṃ sauḥ** (2) **oṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ** (3) **ka e ī la hrīṃ** (4) **ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ** (5) **sa ka la hrīṃ** (6) **sauḥ aiṃ klīṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ.**

The mahāṣoḍaśī occasionally appears without the second of the six units though the form cited above is the one favored by the majority of contemporary adepts. The sixth unit is the first unit's syllables in reverse order which, according to some traditionalists, represents the most secret form of the kāmakalā, that is, the female organ denoted in other places esoterically in the phrase "half the letter °h'".[86] For those to whom ṣoḍaśī is the highest expression of the śrīvidyā, one going beyond the kādividyā pañcadaśī, its ritual and contemplative practice is considered an extension of an earlier initiation into the pañcadaśī. This opinion regarding the superiority of the ṣoḍaśī, however, is not universally shared. Several contemporary lineages maintain that because of the seeming

confusion in the ṣoḍaśī's structure, the pañcadaśī is not only the original form of the mantra but also superior.

J. The Meaning of the Mantra, Initiation and other mantras

> The devotion of the inept to the external ostentation [of the śrīvidyā], being without aptitude for what is necessary, is like a body in which life has perished, or a puppet from which the strings are detached.[87]

Bhāskararāya's remark cited above is a common reminder in Śrīvidyā literature that the efficacy of the mūlamantra is realized only when its meaning is made part of ritual practice and received in a transmission that follows the traditional prescriptions of initiation.[88] The aptitude for initiation and its results are succinctly stated by the SL commentator Kaivalyāśrama who quotes the Rudrayāmala to the effect that, "He who has no other birth receives the supreme pañcadaśākṣarī."[89] This point is essential to our understanding of the Śrīvidyā tradition's self image. Śrīvidyā has always considered initiation (dīkṣā) into the mantra as an elite form of spirituality, one linked to the concept of favorable karma acquired over the course of countless previous births. Like other Tantric sects it does not consider this special knowledge publicly accessible and, at least theoretically, proffers long lists of personal and social virtues that must be embodied before obtaining it.[90]

In its mantra initiations Śrīvidyā is both private and elitist; it asserts, in effect, that the subtle body of the goddess is not able to be worshipped by every devotee of Lalita. In this way the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) differs significantly from the physical (sthūlarūpa) which is generally considered to be open to all Hindus.

Initiation is usually given over an extended period of instruction culminating in an elaborate ritual, the focus of which is the giving of the śrīvidyā. The ritual bestowal of the mantra is frequently accompanied by a gift of a physical śrīcakra that becomes the initiates personal object of worship. These two aspects of the goddess are considered entrusted knowledge, not to be spoken of openly in the company of non-initiates. The initiate usually continues to worship the physical forms (sthūlarūpa) of Lalitā though the focus of attention is now shifted towards the mantra and yantra. Most significant, however, is that the mantra is itself considered the embodiment of knowledge (vidyā).

Rāmānanda remarks that knowledge in the form of the mantra (vidyā) is of two kinds, higher (parā) and lower (aparā); the higher form entails knowledge of Brahman and is in the subtle form (sūkṣma) of the goddess (i.e., the mantra itself) while the lower form, expressed in ritual and discussed in ritual portions of the texts (karmakhaṇḍa), is concerned with the goddess' physical, anthropomorphic

appearance (sthūla). He goes on to say that the vidyā of the supreme Brahman is śrīvidyā.[91]

Śivānanda makes another interpretive distinction. After remarking that the goddess is the essence of the knowledge of mantras, the vidyās themselves, and the heart of the Vedas and Kaula tradition, she is in her higher aspect (parā) the cause of the universe and is in the lower aspect (aparā) the actual effect, that is, the material world. This process of cause and effect is brought about through a free act of grace by the goddess when she is in absolute unity with Śiva. In the undifferentiated form of Brahman as sound (śabda) the mantra begins at the completely unarticulated level, that is, at the parā aspect. It then gradually devolves to the level of articulated speech (vaikharī) and in doing so becomes the manifest universe.[92]

Śrīvidyā tradition associates the power of the Śrīvidyā with all types of accomplishment (siddhi), from the most mundane and worldly to the final goal of liberation. To perform the required forms of contemplative worship (upāsana) under the appropriate conditions is to be guaranteed these accomplishments.[93] Contemporary adepts emphasize that all siddhis other than liberation (mokṣa) are secondary accretions of the higher spiritual discipline; in other words, the Śrīvidyā initiate should aspire only to liberation when meditating on the mantra but in the process

is sure to acquire all other physical and spiritual powers.[94]

PKS 1.9 states that all forms of accomplishment (siddhi) are obtained through mantras and Rāmeśvara clarifies the point by saying that the śrīvidyā, though only one of many mantras, is the only mantra capable of producing all siddhis.[95] Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.4 makes clear that only the śrīvidyā can bring about liberation and not any other vidyā.[96] Precisely how the mantra is viewed in the liberative scheme is taken up separately, in the present context the connection between the empowerment of the mantra and its meanings and transmission deserve some further explanation.

The mantra itself has, according to oral and written traditions, descended in an uninterrupted succession of teachers from Śiva to the present (cf., YH, 2.14). A traceable lineage (parampara) through any one of the lines (sampradāya) of twelve Śrīvidyā teachers is an indispensible component in any particular group's claim to the śrīvidyā.[97] No single point is more frequently or emphatically made than the need for instruction and initiation into the mantra through these lines of qualified teachers.

Rāmeśvara aptly summarizes the opinions of Śrīvidyā adepts on the importance of initiation. Quoting the Paramānanda Tantra he says that "the first step of the

palace of liberation (mukti) is initiation (dīkṣā)."[98] The disciple worthy of this initiation is a paradigm of virtue; one no longer driven by material desires but by the urge to find the liberative truth.[99]

As in other Tantric traditions, Śrīvidyā initiation must be accompanied by unswerving devotion to the guru. To Bhāskararāya and the vast majority of contemporary adepts this loyalty to the teacher's interpretation is absolute: it is simply not possible for the truly qualified teacher to be in error since he is none other than Śiva himself.[100] In addition, Śrīvidyā, unlike some other Tantric traditions, advocates devotion to a single teacher (ekagurupāsti) for all forms of instruction though it is a known fact that several historical commentators including Bhāskararāya received non-Tantric instruction from teachers other than the one who initiated them into the śrīvidyā.

Mantra initiation is not an isolated event but part of a longer process of instruction that may take years. At one level the mantra is the culmination of initiation since it is usually not given until the student has acquired a sophisticated understanding of its esoteric meanings. Yet initiation is only the beginning of the spiritual path, an indispensible requisite for the higher forms of knowledge within the tradition, including the contemplative worship of the goddess.[101] The student is guranteed the efficacy of

the mantra itself provided it comes through an attested lineage. The actual accomplishment of certain powers, however, is considered a result of grace, a gift of the guru and goddess that takes place when the student fulfills his or her vows with sincerity. In Part Two we shall investigate specific cases of initiation addressing the general notion of qualification (adhikāra) and more especially how Śrīvidyā interprets Tantric values that allow non-twice born persons of both genders to participate in the sect.

The process of initiation in the Śrīvidyā tradition is described elaborately in the PKS which devotes an entire chapter to the subject.[102] Before the student actually receives the śrīvidyā, he or she goes through extensive purificatory rites and receives initiation into other mantras considered prefatory to receiving the śrīvidyā.[103] If the particular sampradāya includes the ṣoḍaśī then the pañcadaśī is given first and ṣoḍaśī may (or may not, depending upon the qualification of the student as determined by the guru) be given at the same time or in the future.

All Śrīvidyā lineages in practice include as a prerequisite to initiation into the śrīvidyā at least one other mantra, the mūlamantra of the god Gaṇapati. Rāmeśvara remarks that while the worship of the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa

is merely an accessory to the worship of the great vidyā (mahāvidyā) of Lalitā, it is nonetheless necessary for the successful fulfillment of this higher worship because this god insures the removal of all obstacles.[104] Umānanda concurs that the mūlamantra of Gaṇapati must be given before the initiate receives the śrīvidyā but disagrees with Rāmeśvara's reluctance to accept the guru's instruction as absolute.[105]

The PKS also prescribes initiation into the mantra of Bālātripurasundarī prior to initiation into Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī's mūlamantra. Initiation into Gaṇapati precedes the Bālātripurasundarī mantra and so is hierarchically subordinate to it but while Gaṇapati plays an important role in all later forms of ritual and contemplative worship, Bālātripurasundarī recedes into the background. In many cases, initiation into this lesser aspect of Lalita is foregone completely.[106] It receives only a cursory mention in most ritual handbooks and has drawn little attention from adepts interpreting its esoteric meaning and role in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline.[107]

Gaṇapati's subordinate but necessary role is seen in the construction of the mantra itself: as a request for certain spiritual empowerment combined with seed-syllables (bījākṣaras) it has a definite "ordinary language" element that the śrīvidyā has transcended by favoring only seed-

syllables. Gaṇapati's mantra is recited before any other form of contemplative worship commences. Though of minor importance in the interpretation of Śrīvidyā tradition as a whole, Gaṇapati has the same distinctive role in Śrīvidyā ritual that he has in other Hindu ritual contexts. As Lord of Beginnings and the Remover of Obstacles, Gaṇapati is a significant ritual figure in all types and at all levels of Śrīvidyā worship.

In the case of Bālātripurasundarī the pure seed-syllable configuration is maintained and the mantra itself is formed from the bījākṣara elements of the mahāṣoḍaśī. It appears in two units thus: (1) **oṃ aiṃ klīṃ sauḥ** (2) **sauḥ klīṃ aiṃ**; its repetition of syllables in reverse order draws another parallel to the construction of mahāṣoḍaśī. The dhyānaśloka describing the physical form (sthūlarūpa) of Bālā while usually preceding the mantra's repetition is not included in any of the forms of worship associated with fully mature Lalitā---there is, as it were, no designated place for Bālātripurasundarī in either physical or mantric forms in any Śrīvidyā worship employing the śrīcakra and incorporating the śrīvidyā.[108] Thus for kādimata followers maintaining the supremacy of the ṣoḍaśī, Śrīvidyā's mantric hierarchy culminates with ṣoḍaśī and is followed by pañcadaśī, bālātripurasundarī and the ever present mahāgaṇapati mantra. Without textual references it is not

possible to determine if the hādimata includes the worship of Bālātripurasundarī though her role like that of Gaṇapati is probably identical to kādimata.

Śrīvidyā adepts may worship other Hindu deities according to the broader traditions of mantraśāstra and it is a common belief among living adepts that initiation into the śrīvidyā "automatically qualifies" the adept for any other mantra. This opinion undoubtedly arises as part of the view which asserts śrīvidyā's superiority over all other mantras and the subordination of all gods to Lalitā. Many living adepts have gained a public reputation for their mastery of mantraśāstra rather than strictly as a śrīvidyā worshipper.

Yet another form of the pañcadaśākṣarī is associated with Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī as she is described in her dhyānaśloka though it is not found in the tradition of twelve vidyās and Śrīvidyā teachers.[109] The so-called saubhāgyavidyā pañcadaśākṣarī is not frequently found in paddhatis but is noteworthy for the term saubhāgya, "prosperous", the attribute most commonly associated with Lalitā.[110] Śrīvidyā is sometimes referred to as the Saubhāgya Sampradāya, literally the "Tradition of Prosperity" but more properly, the Tradition which focuses on the saubhāgya aspect of the goddess. The structure of the saubhāgyavidyā is in four units (kūṭas) and includes the

seven seed-syllables appended to the kādividyā in ritual formulations of śrīcakra pūjā: (1) **oṃ aiṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ** (2) **aiṃ ka e ī la hrīṃ** (3) **klīṃ ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ** (4) **sauḥ sa ka la hrīṃ**.[111]

The seven additional seed-syllables or, more frequently, the four of the first kūṭa are themselves appended as a single unit to numerous ritual mantras and invocations as introductory elements. Thus in the śrīcakra pūjā during the identification of sounds with parts of body (i.e., nyāsa) either the complete set of seven or the abbreviated four syllables are repeated before each line. It is common to see, for example, simply the number seven written before these nyāsa mantras. This indicates the use of the seven bījākṣaras before it as in the common matṛkanyāsa: 7 **aṃ kaṃ khaṃ gaṃ ghaṃ nan aṃ anguṣṭhāyaṃ namaḥ**; or the four as in the karaśuddhinyāsa: 4 **aṃ namaḥ**.[112] These sets of bījākṣaras, while not associated with a form of the śrīvidyā mūlamantra, are essential elements of the esoteric mantra system incorporated into the larger ritual tradition. The seven seed-syllables are associated with conferring prosperity and with making auspicious other sets of mantras. This would explain why they are appended to the pañcadaśākṣarī in ritual contexts but omitted during japa and how this unusual variation on the fifteen syllable mantra is generated. Contemporary lineages differ on the

question of the appropriateness of these appendages to the nyāsa mantras.

Another form of the śrīvidyā that appears to be a later development is the so-called sādi form. In this configuration the mantra begins with the syllable sa, that is, the śaktikūṭa replaces the vāgbhavakūṭa. Since it is mentioned in the TT the sādi was known from a relatively early period but does not appear as one of the forms in the tradition of twelve sages. While the Bahvṛcha Upaniṣad also mentions this form there is no historical evidence that it was anything other than a theoretical formulation designed to complement the kādi and hādi schemes. Without ritual handbooks devoted to its description or practice, or historical figures claiming allegiance to it, there is no indication of its being part of the historical or living practical tradition.

K. Secrecy and the Articulation of the Mantra

All Śrīvidyā sources maintain a degree of secrecy regarding the explicit utterance of the mantra and, as it has been shown, it is common to find the vidyā encoded in technical or mystical language. Śrīvidyā sources, however, do not employ or refer to the use of the so-called sandhyabhāṣa or "twilight language" common to Buddhist sources.[113] The mantra is not couched in metaphors or poetic simile but rather is expressed through specific

technical vocabulary.

Only in ritual manuals does one see the forms of the mantra actually written as they have been presented here. These texts have only been meant for practical use within closed circles of initiates. Many contemporary adepts object to any overt form being either verbalized or printed, fearing its misuse by the uninitiated and a violation of the tenets of secrecy. Adepts do not ordinarily verbalize the mantra in a manner that would allow others to hear it unless it is during ritual or under private instructional circumstances. So long as texts circulate only among the initiated and ritual prescriptions restrict the presence of non-initiates, the secrecy of the actual mantra is maintained. This, however, is not usually the case and the astute listener can hear the "secret sounds" of the _Śrīvidyā_ in many public and semi-private ritual situations in contemporary south India.

One theological reason for the mantra's secrecy is immediately apparent: it is the subtle nature of the Absolute, not merely a name or representation of it; to utter it is to enunciate the source of power that creates, maintains and destroys the universe. Repeating the mantra aloud in the presence of the uninitiated is considered potentially dangerous because of the possibility that it might be used without proper instruction and qualification.

Despite the belief that the mantra becomes fully "empowered" only through initiation and has liberative power only when its esoteric meanings are comprehended, it is part of a meta-linguistic reality and as such contains an inherent power.[114] By its being identical with the Vedic praṇava and gāyatrī and thus a form of the Absolute Brahman, the mantra is an expression of power that can be used or misused for any material or spiritual end.[115]

The mantra in the Śrīvidyā tradition's view of the attainment of liberation combines grace, individual self-effort and what might be called "magic". The "magical" quality of the mantra is its inherent power derived from its being the subtle emanation of the goddess and thus an embodiment of Brahman. It can bring about extraordinary events, ones that defy all normal and conventional modes of understanding. The mantra can move mountains in addition to effecting personal liberation.

The guru, an embodiment of both Śiva and Śakti, is the primary source for bringing out the mantra's latent power. The student is not only dependent upon the teacher for providing the mantra's esoteric meaning but for empowering the sounds themselves. Since the mantra is itself in a direct chain of transmission from Śiva and Śakti, the guru provides what no written source can: the living embodiment of the mantra's meaning and power. Perhaps no point is more

constantly reiterated in Tantric traditions; accomplishment is the result only of practice, practice that must be guided and blessed by a qualified teacher whose own powers derive from a continuity of lineage.

Thus the initiation into the _śrīvidyā_ is an act of the guru's grace on whom the student's continuing welfare and achievement are dependent. The necessity of the guru's grace does not mean that individual self effort is vitiated but that without this personal instruction there can be no claim to a continuity of spiritual power that has followed the mantra from its eternal source. The goal of mantra _sādhana_ finally depends upon the initiate's own contemplative efforts and response to the guru's instructions. Thus Śrīvidyā combines three distinct but interrelated soteriological perspectives: "magic" (i.e., the inherent power of mantras), grace (e.g., in the empowerment gained by worship of the deity and through the guru) and self-effort, all of which balance an active form of theism and devotionalism with a non-dualistic interpretation of the Absolute Brahman.

1. Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad, v.26, cf., Warrier translation, p.8.

2. That is, when interpreted as a genitive tatpuruṣa compound. See LSN, n.1, Śastry trans., p.39 for a discussion of the meanings of Śrī according to Bhāskararāya.

3. Originally appearing in Oriens 16 (1963), pp.244-297, reprinted in J. Gonda, Selected Studies, Presented to the author by the staff of the Oriental Institute, Utrecht University on the occasion of his 70th birthday, Vol.IV, History of Ancient Indian Religion, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp.248-301. Citation is of Woodroffe's remark on p.252. Hereafter cited as "Gonda, °The Indian Mantra'".

4. LSN, n.786, cf.Sastry, p.302.

5. Its source may well be Kulārṇava Tantra, 17.14. See for an elaborate discussion of this etymology, Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.252, in the edition cited above.

6. Sastry, p.16.

7. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.283.

8. See Bhāskararāya on LSN, n.227-228, Sastry, p.127.

9. Bhāskararāya's legendary biography in oral traditions relates many instances of his mastery of mantraśāstra and the establishment of his reputation through this type of knowledge. Contemporary traditions offer many comparable examples, see Part Two for details.

10. Cf., Bhāskararāya on LSN, n.228.

11. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

12. Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad is included in A.G. Krishna Warrier's translation of Śākta Upanisads; see The Śākta Upaniṣads, trans., A.G. Krishna Warrier. Adyar Library: Adyar, Madras, 1967. The popular edition of the text is in: The Śākta Upaniṣads, ed., A. Mahadeva Sastri. Adyar Library: Adyar, Madras, 1950. A version including a previously unaccounted for commentary by Rāmānanda the Samayin was discovered in the Adyar Library Mss. Collection. This too has been consulted. Regarding the twelve sages of Śrīvidyā, different texts provide different lists. Cf., the minor variations from the LSN version (in Bhāskararāya's commentary on n.238) with that of Jñānārṇava Tantra.

13. Sastry, pp.130-131.

14. For references to Lopamudrā see the beginning of *LSN*.

15. An opinion expressed by "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali among others.

16. See *YH*,2.14, p.95, Kaviraj, second edition.

17. *NS*, pp.46-49.

18. *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras*, Introduction and verse 1.

19. *Śrīvidyāratnasūtras*, v.4.

20. *LSN*, n.6, Sastry p.47.

21. *PKS*, p.29 in the 1979 reprint edition.

22. *Yoginīhṛdayadīpikā*, 2.18.

23. The complete absence of *paddhatis* focusing on the *hādividyā* is discussed below.

24. Discussed below with reference to the presentation of the mantra in *Tripurā Upaniṣad*.

25. See Rāmeśvara on *PKS*, *dvitīyapariśiṣṭha*, 4.; *Kulārnava Tantra* also discusses the three kinds of *japa*, see *KT*, 15.54.

26. See *YH*.1.36ff.

31. *VVR*, 1.20-21.

28. *YH*, 1.12.

29. *VVR*, 1.4., p.6.

30. See *HT*, p.93f.

31. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", pp.277-278.

32. Cf., *Māṇḍukyopaniṣadkārikās*, 1.1ff.

33. *VVR*.1.7. Here the reference is actually to the Vedic *gāyatrī* which is implied to be the same as the *praṇava*. See Bhāskararāya's remarks to that effect cited below.

34. *VVR*, 1.7, p.7.

35. VVR, 2.60-61, pp.37-39.

36. See Rāmeśvara on PKS, 1.31 and Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.32f; also see below, Part Two, remarks by contemporary adepts of "Gāyatrī" and other Mandalis.

37. Bhāskararāya says as much in his commentary on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.8 where he says, "In the Tripurātāpinī [Upaniṣad] it has been clearly stated that the Gāyatrī [mantra] designates the original knowledge [or mantra, ādividyā]..."

38. Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad, v.7, see Warrier edition, p.3.

39. TTU, v.13, see Warrier edition, p.4.

40. TTU, v.15, see Warrier edition, p.5.

41. For a concise and accurate explanation of the basic principles of kuṇḍalinī yoga see HT, pp.163-180.

42. See JT, chapters 11 and 12.

43. In most contemporary lineages rituals repeated as obligations are not usually duplicated when both Vedic and Tantric versions exist. In the case of dvija caste initiates the Vedic version is retained and the Tantric parallel foregone since it is believed that the Vedic rite subsumes the Tantric. I have never encountered a situation in which the Tantric rite is retained and the Vedic version made optional. This is usually explained as the fulfillment of a nityakarma in which the Vedic rite or mantra has precedence due to its antiquity. The Tantric version is nitya only on non-dvija caste initiates.

44. Basham, A. L., The Wonder That Was India. New York: Grove Press, 1959, p.162.

45. See Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", the first example is cited on p.263, the second on pp.292-293.

46. Cf., examples cited in Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.279, ftn.3, especially his remarks regarding Kanada who gives a systematic exposition of Vaisesika interpretations and says that muttering mantras is necessary for gaining the objects of desire.

47. Gonda, "The Indian Mantra", p.279.

48. Adept of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

49. See PKS, dīkṣāvidhi, for details.

50. This is explained in more detail in the Introduction to the translation of Tripurā Upaniṣad at the beginning of Part Three (Appendix One).

51. Bhāskararāya refers to this verse at many points in his works, cf., VVR, 1.7.; see also K.R. Venkataraman's remarks in the article entitled, "Śakti Cult in South India" in Vol.IV of The Cultural History of India, edited by a board of editors of the Rāmakrishna Institute, Rāmakrishna Mission: Calcutta, reprint ed. 1983, pp.252-259.

52. VVR, 1.7.

53. Cf., Venkataraman, cited above, p.257, ftn.7.

54. Cf., Naṭānandanātha's Cidvallī on KKV cited in Venkataraman, p.257, ftn.7. On kāmakalā see HT, p.145f.

55. PKS, 1.30, p.42.

56. PKS, 1.30, p.42.

57. According to this symbolic pattern, k = krodhīsa = śiva = śrīkaṇṭha = a, the first letter of Sanskrit and, ī = lakṣmī, etc., see VVR, 1.9-11 for one full set of these identifications.

58. See HT, p.65 for a list of the daśamahāvidyās.

59. VVR, 1.12-13.

60. See VVR, 1.36 for the first example and 1.38 for the second.

61. VVR, 1.37 for the first example and 1.39 for the second.

62. VVR, 2.54-55.

63. VVR, 2.67-68, 2.73, pp.55-56. This explanation in VVR follows the outline of the six arthas given in YH, 2.24ff.

64. VVR, 2.74-80, pp.60-64.

65. VVR, 2.81.

66. VVR, 2.82-83.

67. VVR, 2.85, p.77.

68. VVR, 2.102, p.90.

69. VVR, 2.109.

70. Cf., VVR, 2.133; the chart is based on VVR, 2.121-126 and 2.128-130.

71. For other examples of these types of gāyatrīs and a brief explanation of them see HT, p.123f.

72. See PKS, 3.5 and Rāmeśvara's remarks.

73. See Bhāskararāya on Tripurā Upaniṣad, Verse 8.

74. Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.8f; see the full translation below.

75. Bhāskararāya on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.9.

76. Bhāskararāya on Tripurā Upaniṣad, v.9. For the remark on the superiority of kādi see the Setubandha, 1.8. Here Bhāskararāya says that of mantras śrīvidyā is supreme and among the versions of the śrīvidyā, the kādi is supreme. Thus hādi is rejected as equal in the explanation offered in NSA, a kādimata text as Bhāskararāya asserts.

77. See the translation for details. Bhāskararāya explains the act of substitution in his commentary, that is, the way the words six, seven and vahni are interpreted to mean the syllables **ha, sa** and **ka**.

78. See SL, v.12ff.

79. Punyānanda does explicitly make clear his commitment to the use of hadi in KKV, v.18.

80. This remark initially made by "Agastya" of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali was later independently confirmed by at least four other adepts.

81. See Setubandha on YH, 2.14.

82. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.25, Sastry, p.51.

83. Cf., LSN, n.391, n.587.

84. Bhāskararāya on LSN, n.88 says (under mūlamantrātmika), "Mūla, root, this is the fifteen syllable mantra, pañcadaśī...". See Sastry, p.86.

85. Bhāskararāya notes on LSN, n.3 that in some cases the addition of śrīm comprises the sixteenth letter of the sodaśī and that the śrīvidyā has both fifteen and sixteen syllable configurations (see LSN, n.7).

86. See the translation of Tripurā Upanisadbhāṣya.

87. VVR, 2.163.

88. A very similar sentiment is expressed, for example, in PKS 1.30, (pp.42-43) in which the importance of giving dīkṣa to only intelligent disciples is emphasized.

89. Kaivalyāśrama quoting the RY on SL, v.8., p.94.

90. Cf., PKS, prathama khaṇḍa, which, along with Rāmeśvara's commentary, explains in detail the requirements for guru and disciple.

91. See Rāmānanda on Tripurā Upaniṣad, Introduction, p.4f.

92. Ṛjuvimarśinī on NSA.1.8.

93. In this sense the notion of the efficacy of the ritual and the use of the mantra is not unlike the general concept of Vedic tradition in the period of the Brāhmaṇas. Tantrism seems to be harkening back, as it were, to a time when ritual and mantric powers were in a direct causal relationship to effects in the natural and social worlds. According to this world view, doing the correct ritual and following the prescriptions to the letter provided a guaranteed outcome. Dissatisfaction with this rather mechanical correspondence of natural and social forces with supernatural and ritual counterparts is, at least to some measure, responsible for the emergence of the later speculative views recorded in the early Upanisads and by other non-Vedic oriented traditions.

94. On the acquisition of mundane and supernormal abilities see PKS, 1.13 which mentions the siddhi of añja, that is, to bless and punish others, and Rāmeśvara on PKS, 1.9 (p.28) where he says that all siddhis come as the result of this mantra, and that even though there is only one cause, the mantra, it is capable of producing many effects.

95. It should be noted that the siddhis beginning with anima, the power to become infinitesimally small, are the first the upāsaka gains. The design of the śrīcakra supports this idea by identifying these siddhis on it outermost gates, another indication of their relative

inferiority in the ritual process. The accomplishment of these spiritual and material powers has always been a subject of great debate within Śrīvidyā tradition. While their literal acquisition is not questioned, their importance in accomplishing the "higher" aim of liberation is continuously debated. Many adepts maintain that there should be no overt use of any acquired power since this distracts the adept and "drains" his spiritual "account"; others argue that the use of siddhi is a natural extension of sādhana and convinces the skeptical of the power of the vidyā.

96. See p.200 of Kaviraj's second edition.

97. All paramparas list their own gurus in succession and attempt to trace themselves back to one of Śrīvidyā's twelve sages, particularly Kāmeśvara and Lopamudrā. Curiously, some while practicing only the Kāmeśvara lineage form of the mantra, still maintain that their lineage descends from one of the other gurus. Rāmeśvara commenting on PKS, 1.9 defines sampradāya (see p.27) and says that one gains all siddhis only through tradition and confidence (or faith, visvāsa) in contemplative practice. He also notes that the mantra is capable of influencing any natural phenomena or social situation; in essence, he maintains that an initiate experienced in the use of the śrīvidyā can do anything.

98. See Rāmeśvara on PKS, 1.1., p.14.

99. See also Rāmeśvara on PKS, 1.15-19, pp.30-33. One observes here a remarkable similarity to the so-called catuṣṭhaya sādhana of Śaṅkara, a point that is not lost on contemporary adepts with links to the Śāṅkara tradition. For a discussion of dīkṣā see HT, pp.71-89.

100. See Rāmeśvara's remarks on PKS, 1.20 (p.35) where he disagrees with this policy and suggests that when a teacher deviates from tradition it is the student's responsibility to tell the guru. The disciple must continuously question a guru's adherence to tradition and with the permission of the teacher the student can even correct and revise the guru's instruction. This notion is actually foreign to the majority of traditionalists who, by revering their teachers as Śiva, cannot imagine that this incarnate deity could err.

101. Rāmeśvara on PKS,2.1. says that without dīkṣā one is not entitled to do śrīvidyā upāsana. The great mantra or mahāvidyā, he says, is either the pañcadaśī or ṣoḍaśī and Rāmeśvara appears to express no preference. PKS discusses the mantra only in terms of kādi and hādi and not as

pañcadaśī or sodaśī---the pañcadaśī is obviously the form assumed for ritual prescriptions. Rāmeśvara also offers the meaning of mahāvidyā as Lalitā, but either interpretation secures it the preeminent place, in his view, in the mantric hierarchy

102. See the dīkṣāvidhi of the PKS for details.

103. For an elaboration on these purificatory rites see the Van Hoens section in HT as well as Gupta on pūjā.

104. See Rāmeśvara on PKS,2.1. where he says here that Gaṇapati fulfills this common role of remover of obstacles. The mantra of ganapati, unlike the śrīvidyā, has a semantic meaning. It reads: **oṃ śrīṃ hrīṃ glīṃ glauṃ gaṃ gaṇapataye varavarada sarvajagan me vasamānaya svāhā.**

105. See the NS, p.10.

106. It should be noted that living traditions in south India have almost entirely forsaken initiation into the Bālātripurasundarī mantra. This subject is taken up in some detail in Part Two.

107. In fact the Bālā mantra is mentioned only in PKS and NS while other earlier handbooks, including the Saubhāgyaratnākāra, omit it completely. It is possible that the mantra is a late historical development, part of a larger effort to elaborate and complete the theoretical aspects of Śrīvidyā sādhana.

108. The usual dhyānaśloka of Bālātripurasundarī reads: **aruṇakiraṇajālairañcitāsābakāśā vidhṛta japapaṭīkā-pustakābhītahastā/ itarakaravarāḍhyā phuhlakahlarasaṅsthā nivasatu hṛdi bālā nityakalyāṇaśīlā//** It translates: "Let the Youthful One dwell in the heart, She whose virtue is always true, who is established in the sounds of expansion, who bears in her hands the fearless scripture, and recites [the mantra of the goddess]; she who maintains the appearance of a fawn, who is arrayed in a net of red beaming splendor."

109. See the section on the sthūla aspect for this dhyānaśloka and translation.

110. These manuscripts were shown to me by an adept of the "Ānanda" Mandali in Madras, January, 1985.

111. See the handbook bearing the title Mantravidānam, edited by Aṇṇā, published in Sanskrit and Tamil, Ramakrishna Matha: Madras, 1981, p.83. The mantra and dhyānaśloka appear here in a slightly different form than those private manuscripts I have seen in Madras.

112. See "Aṇṇā's" paddhati, p.18 for the details of mātṛkanyāsa and p.22 for the karaśuddhinyāsa. Both rituals are portions of the śrīcakra pūjā in which parts of the body are identified with letters of the Sanskrit alphabet which are, in turn, identified with parts of the śrīcakra.

113. Cf., HT, p.104.

114. Unlike conventional speech which falls into the vaikharī, or mundane category, Śāktas consider mantras an articulation at the madhyamā level.

115. This point is made by Rāmeśvara on PKS, 1.9, p.28. He here notes again the efficacy of the mantra to produce tangible results.

Part One
Chapter Seven
Śrīcakra: The Transcendent Aspect of Devī

A. Introductory Remarks

> When She, the Supreme Śakti, out of her own will [assumes] the form of the Universe, observing her own self effusion (sphurattama), the cakra emerges.[1]

The symbolism of the śrīcakra is, along with the śrīvidyā, the most elaborately discussed theological topic in Śrīvidyā tradition. Visually it is perhaps, as Goudriaan has observed, the most famous configuration in all Hindu Tantrism.[2] Yet its interpretation has remained obscure to the majority of Śāktas as has its specialized worship to the majority of Hindus. These two aspects of the śrīcakra, its symbolic interpretation and its ritual worship, are best treated separately---an approach assumed by the Yoginīhṛdaya and by contemporary adepts in south India.[3]

The focus of this chapter's discussion will parallel the tradition's own symbolic focus: the śrīcakra is the primary cosmological symbol representing Śakti as the Supreme Principle, particularizing (kalā) herself in the form of the created universe. The śrīcakra's microcosmic form is the human body and as a macrocosmic symbol represents the essence of all physical, mental and phonic phenomena.

The *śrīcakra* or *śrīyantra* is of uncertain historical origins though there is evidence of its presence within established Hindu temples in south India from about the sixth century.[4] Also commonly called the *śrīyantra*, that is, "the *yantra* of the goddess Śrī" or "the *yantra* of prosperity", the *śrīcakra* is not usually referred to as a *maṇḍala* (literally, circle).[5] Details describing the methods for its drawing and its symbolism are discussed in textual sources only from the period of the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*, that is, from around the same period as its appearance in southern temples.[6] It seems certain, however, that the *śrīcakra* must have emerged in its invenerate form much earlier than these written and historical references indicate. Precisely when and where it first appeared and by whom it was composed is entirely unknown. Śrīvidyā tradition restricts itself to mythological and metaphysical descriptions of the cakra and gives no historical accounts of its appearance. Unlike the *śrīvidyā*, the *śrīcakra*'s forms are not attributed to sages or demi-gods who received them from Śiva or Śakti. It is, from the traditional perspective, the "original" cosmic form in which the universe has come forth. Historically, however, there is no verifiable textual or epigraphical evidence of its presence before the sixth century.

Śrīvidyā traditionalists claim that the *śrīcakra*, like

the *śrīvidyā*, is referred to in ancient Vedic texts. The passages they cite, however, unfortunately offer no verifiable literary evidence.[7] Adepts maintain that these references are esoteric and that the Vedic seers have deliberately concealed the cakra in order to protect the unqualified; the meanings of these esoteric passages can be brought to light to only by a qualified teacher.

Like other yantras, the *śrīcakra* was developed by specialists to fulfill private ritual and speculative needs and while there is no substantive evidence, it would seem that the actual configuration was conceived together with a significant amount of its symbolic intent intact. The coherence of the cakra's ritual symbolism is far too consistent for it to have been superimposed over a pre-existing configuration.

The *śrīcakra*'s private ritual use has always overshadowed its public worship and its interpretation presupposes the oral traditions of Śrīvidyā's lineages. As a *yantra*, it conforms to Stella Kramrisch's general definition:

> A Yantra is a geometrical contrivance by which any aspect of the Supreme Principle may be bound (yantṛ, to bind; from the root 'yam') to any spot for the purpose of worship. It is an artiface in which the ground (bhumi) is converted into the extent of the manifest universe.[8]

Kramrisch has in mind yantras used for temple

construction, that is, as symbols of the metaphysical plan upon which temples are based. This general notion also applies to the *śrīcakra* inasmuch as it too has served as a model for certain later temples and religious structures though it was not conceived for such purposes.[9] Śrīvidyā tradition, however, regards the *śrīcakra* not as one particular metaphysical blueprint among others but as the source of all *yantras*: the *śrīcakra* is *the* model of the universe reflecting the original structure of creation.

At the first level of interpretation the *śrīcakra* is a yantra in the classic sense; it is a metaphysical model that parallels the form it embodies. Yet it is not only the blueprint of the original creative act but the very form creation has subtlely assumed. In addition, the *śrīcakra* is more than a description of creation since it may serve as a map which, along with the proper instructions, shows the way back to this creative source. Like all maps its graphic forms must be read according to specified patterns of meaning, which in this case are so specialized as to require initiated instruction. The adept charts the path back to the origins of being by interpreting the cakra's cosmological significance.

But unlike a map which merely represents reality, the *śrīcakra* is identified with that reality: it is not only a depiction of reality's form but its content made

representational. This point is crucial to further analysis: each part of the cakra is itself the manifestation of reality it represents. If the <u>śrīvidyā</u> is the phonic emanation of Brahman then the <u>śrīcakra</u> is, as it were, the shape the <u>śrīvidyā</u> assumes in the creation process. As a visual projection of creation it is the subtle form of manifested reality that is paralleled phonically in the mantra.

The <u>śrīcakra</u>'s form is not intended to represent all the various constituents of the visible, material world: it is, rather, the world emerging in its essential aspects (<u>kalās</u>) particularized from the amorphous Brahman. As Śivānanda notes, the <u>śrīcakra</u> is not merely an external form of the goddess but is identical with her. Since it is the goddess' form and substance it is also capable of yielding, like the goddess herself, all imaginable desires and powers. These achievements, however, are contingent upon the adept realizing the metaphysical identity of his own body and soul with the <u>śrīcakra</u> and <u>śrīvidyā</u>.[10] Puṇyānanda suggests a similar idea when he says there is no difference between the supreme deity and the <u>śrīcakra</u>; at the cakra's center, he says, is seated Śiva, the original guru, who along with the goddess creates the lineages of teachers.[11] Thus to learn the meaning of the <u>śrīcakra</u>'s elements is to gain access to its creative power; the cakra is both a representation of

creation and the primal force behind creation's becoming manifest. The *śrīcakra*, Vidyānanda remarks, is the clear medium in which the goddess is reflected, it is the form of Śakti as well as a reflection (*vimarśa*) of her. Thus, he concludes, the one who meditates on the cakra is capable of achieving any wish since it is the reflection of all material and spiritual powers.[12]

Śrīvidyā traditionalists do not disagree concerning the identification of the *śrīcakra* with the beneficent goddess or its power to confer worldly and spiritual aims. The *śrīcakra*'s configuration, however, is not without controversy. Variations in its physical construction are part of sectarian and theological differences deserving more careful scrutiny. The sectarian interpretation, for example, of the Samaya school in which the usual form of the *śrīcakra* is turned "upside down" or the variations in the cakra's "three circles" (*vṛttatraya*) referred to by Bhāskararāya are best appreciated in light of the configuration's catholic interpretation. The figure of the *śrīcakra* on the following page (figure one) is the one most commonly referred to by historical and modern traditionalists. It is the reference for our basic analysis and follows the description of the *dhyānaśloka* found commonly in modern ritual handbooks:

> [The central] *bindu*, [the inner triangle

> called the] trikona, [the sub-cakra of eight triangles called the] vasukona [and the two sets of] ten [sub-triangles] conjoined [that follow the vasukona]; manvaśra [the sub-cakra of fourteen triangles] is joined to the serpentine (nāga) [eight lotus] petals [and to these] the sixteen [lotus petals] and the three circles and the three palaces of the earth [that make up the outer gateways]: this is śrīcakra of the supreme deity.[13]

This dhyānaśloka, like the verse describing Lalitā's physical (sthūla) form, is designed as a description of the aspect deemed suitable for worship. This particular verse, however, while serving its primary purpose as a succinct descriptive definition, is not usually included in ritual worship. It assumes a complete familiarity with the actual arrangement of the cakra's components and leaves aside any symbolic meanings. The verse it appears was meant merely to describe the cakra's "original" form. It follows the so-called sṛṣṭhikrama or "creation method", beginning with the central point of the figure, the bindu, and proceeding outward by listing the śrīcakra's nine sub-cakras.

The śrīcakra's central portion is its trademark; the intersection of five over four major triangles producing the five sets of minor triangles, themselves called cakras. These sets of minor triangles forming cakras are in the present contexts called "sub-cakras" inasmuch as they are the minor units of the śrīcakra. There should be no confusion: the term cakra, literally "wheel", can mean any

identifiable pattern of figures or configuration which when taken as a single unit is a center of specific properties. Thus the groups of triangles formed from the larger intersection of the nine major triangles are referred to as "cakras" when discussed as single entities. Within Śrīvidyā tradition little attention is actually given to the symbolism of the major triangles; speculations focus on the sub-cakras emerging from the major triangles' intersection. The two sets of sixteen and eight lotus-shaped petals as well as the lines forming the outer gateways are also considered sub-cakras.

The intersecting major triangles thus create five triangular sub-cakras to which are added the three sub-cakras of petals and lines. The central bindu provides the ninth element and is referred to as the baindava cakra.[14] In these sub-cakras, taken as individual units each with its own name, characteristics and forms of power, the adept sees creation emerging in its essence and particularity. From the cosmological perspective the movement from the central bindu towards the outer gateways (bhūpura) symbolizes increasingly more manifest and mundane forms of reality. With each sub-cakra the ordinary world becomes more explicit and recognizable; the process being a gradual devolution from Brahman. The śrīcakra's major triangles while not a focus of speculation have an important overarching symbolism

which should not be overlooked.

According to Śrīvidya tradition the śrīcakra's basic intersection of five and four major triangles represents the union of the Goddess Śakti and Śiva; the five downward facing major triangles are symoblic of Śakti while the four upward facing indicate Śiva. This union is often viewed as sexual. As the Brahmāṇḍapūraṇa states:

> The śrīcakra, the body of Śiva (śivayorvapuḥ), is established by the nine cakras, [that is,] by the four cakras of Śiva and by the five cakras of Śakti.[15]

In the bindu, Śakti and Śiva are in a state of absolute unity, not merely in dichotomous union as the intersecting nine major triangles represent. The intersecting major triangles have both an explicit and esoteric sexual symbolism. The five downward facing Śakti triangles are in the "aspect of desire" (kāmakalā) and represent the female organ. The four upward facing Śiva triangles are symbolic of the liṅga and the sexual embrace formed by the intersection of the five triangles meeting four.

The five Śakti triangles are also symbolic of the primordial form of the five elements that make up the created world, that is, earth (pṛthivī), water (āp), air (vāyu), fire (agni) and space (ākāśa). The four Śiva triangles, also called Agni triangles, symbolize the

principles that give shape to the material world; their function is to provide a metaphysical basis upon which the material universe is organized. These four Agni (or Fire) principles are known by their technical names: (1) māyā, the power of deception that permits the one to appear as many; (2) śuddha vidyā, pure knowledge in the form of mantra that permeates all things as the phonic source of being; (3) maheśvara or the Great Lord (Śiva) who stabalizes the creative flux of Śakti and (4) sadāśiva, the eternal Śiva who is the basis upon which all the rest are established.[16]

The five intersecting four triangles are at the root of two of the most basic cosmological functions, namely, creation and dissolution. As the Yoginīhṛdaya states:

> The fivefold Śakti [cakras] are [identified with] creation and the fourfold Agni [i.e., Śiva cakras] are [identified with] dissolution; the [nine sub-cakras] arise from the conjunction of the five Śaktis and the four Vanhis [i.e., Śivas].[17]

The five Śakti triangles are further considered the source of the five material components of the human body, namely, flesh, fat, skin, blood and bone, while the four Siva triangles are the give rise to marrow, semen, breath (prāṇa) and life (jīva).[18]

The focus of the śrīcakra's interpretation, however, centers not on the major triangles themselves but on their resulting intersections, that is, on the sub-cakras of minor

triangles, two sets of lotus petals and lines forming the outer gateways. The nine sub-cakras including the sets of lotus petals and the outer gateways are also identified in groups with Śakti and Śiva. The five sub-cakras of minor triangles are associated with Śakti while the two sets of lotus petals, the outer gateways (bhūpura) and, according to some interpretations, the three circles surrounding the sixteen lotuses are Śiva's. These two groups of Śiva and Śakti sub-cakras are then interidentified in order to emphasize their intrinsic identity and union. The process links the Śiva sub-cakras with the Śakti sub-cakras thusly:

Śiva sub-cakras	**Śakti sub-cakras**
Three Circles (traivalya or vṛttatraya)	= Innermost Trikoṇa
Eight Petalled Lotus (aṣṭadalapadma)	= Vasukoṇa
Sixteen Petalled Lotus (ṣoḍasadalapadma)	= Two sets of 10 triangles
Outermost Gateways of Three Lines (bhūpura)	= Fourteen triangles

B. Śrīcakra: The Symbol of Creation

For traditionalists viewing the śrīcakra as a represention of the creative process devolving from its original source, the analysis naturally begins at the cosmological center, the bindu. When the cakra is taken, as it were, as a map showing the way back to this source, the analysis proceeds in just the opposite fashion, that is, from the outermost sub-cakras towards the center.

Ritual practice tracing the map's path back to the

source of creation therefore begins in the midst of dualistic reality represented by the śrīcakra's triangles, petals and outer lines. It assumes the opposite perspective from that of the creation method's cosmological description. It focuses instead on the so-called "destructive method" (samhārakrama). From this perspective one moves from the outermost sub-cakras towards the bindu, that is from dualistic and discursive reality to the focal point of non-dual, non-verbal consciousness. In the ritual process employing the destructive method (samhārakrama) the adept dissolves, as it were, the egoistic personality into the original source of being.

In contrast, purely cosmological and theological analysis begins at the one point from whence creation came forth, the central bindu, and proceeds to greater and greater forms of diversity. Both the sṛṣṭikrama and the samhārakrama methods of analyzing the śrīcakra serve distinctive yet interrelated purposes in Śrīvidyā's spiritual discipline. By analyzing creation as a cosmological event in which reality comes forth (sṛṣṭikrama) as the śrīcakra the adept intellectually grounds spiritual discipline. In ritual practices designed to lead back to the source of being the adept methodically dissolves (samhārakrama) the manifold back into the One.

The _bindu_ at the center of the _śrīcakra_ represents the non-differentiated state of being that preceeds manifest creation. When the _bindu_ in its pure illuminative state (_prakāśa_ = Śiva) emerges as a reflection (_vimarśa_ = Śakti) in the form of everyday reality it has already assumed a "triadic" shape, that is, it has taken shape as the triangles, lotus petals and lines of the _śrīcakra_. This "triadic" shape represents the basic epistemological and ontological forms within the ordinary world; for example, dualistic reality consists of subjects, objects and the process of coginition.

In metaphysical terms the originally undifferentiated One is viewed as binary, Śiva and Śakti. The real nature of the _śrīcakra_, Śivānanda points out, is the undivided essence of Śiva and Śakti who are the source (_bīja_) of subject/object distinctions.[19] The unified Brahman undergoes no change to assume this binary form. It remains a single reality which, theologically speaking, has two features. The binary nature of the One reality is distinguished only at the ordinary level of epistemological dualism. From the perspective of yogic knowledge the Śrīvidyā adept maintains there is no difference whatsoever between Śiva and Śakti, the One Brahman remains intact; the transformation of the One reality to two theological forms is a cognitive act on the part of a cognizer lacking yogic

knowledge. As Bhāskararāya notes, it is the mere will of the deity that creates the universe; creation issues forth from her own being at the moment of its conception.[20]

In the Indian world-view epistemological dualism is not binary but tertiary. The cognitive process, for example, accompanies the cognizing subject and cognized object. Just as the epistemological process is considered threefold so are the material transformations of Brahman and their phonic parallels. Brahman's assumption of two theological forms involves no actual change in its nature, yet its transformation (pariṇāma) into manifest reality assumes a genuine shift into triadic forms. This transformation is, however, purely one of form and not of substance.

Śāktism accepts that the One Brahman, assuming the binary form of Śiva and Śakti, is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. Brahman never substantially changes but merely assumes gradually more mundane shapes in the process of becoming manifest. These gradual transformations are not illusory (vivārta) but actual, the product of the deliberate will of the Creator who spins creation out of its own being like a spider spins its web.[21]

Śāktas acknowledge both efficient and material causality as properties of Śakti but only material causality

as a property of Śiva. Śiva remains entirely inert, as Śākta literature says, like a corspe without his Śakti.[22] Hence in Srīvidyā, as in other Śākta traditions, the Śiva aspect is identical to Śakti from the ultimate perspective but is not associated with the conventional, creative force or the transformation (pariṇāma) into the manifest world. Śrīvidyā traditionalists equate the male and female aspects so long as the discussion focuses on their original state of identity, that is, as Brahman (Śiva) united to the Self (ātman, Śakti). As soon as the focus shifts to the triads of dualistic reality the basic differences between Śiva and Śakti are affirmed. Śakti is given the superior position as that aspect encompassing both material and causal powers and as the Self reflecting (vimarśa) the illuiminative (prakāśa), immobile Brahman.

C. Symbolism and Interpretation of the Śrīcakra

The analysis of the śrīcakra as a cosmological symbol follows the pattern given in its dhyānaśloka, that is, beginning with the bindu, and describing the cakra according to the creation method (sṛṣṭhikrama). This method is the point of departure adopted most frequently in traditional cosmological analyses of the śrīcakra.

As Puṇyānanda states in the KKV, the supreme nature of the śrīcakra is the bindu, it is the cause of the nine sub-

cakras and the source of the initial phonic emanations of Brahman.[23] A contemporary adept summarized these views in response to the question,"What is the śrīcakra?". He said:

> The bindu alone is the śrīcakra. All the rest is just an addition. In the bindu everything is contained since it is the very form (svarūpa) of Brahman. The bindu is the true form of Śiva and Śakti since it is one and naturally the whole cakra is within it.[24]

The goddess is seated on the bindu on and the left thigh of Kāmeśvara (Śiva). There she resembles the rising sun and her three eyes are in the form of the moon, sun and fire.[25] It is from her union with Śiva, Amṛtānanda says, that this great bindu was born and from the bindu the whole universe spewed (vāma) forth.[26] The bindu's form, unlike the triangles and lines of the sub-cakras that are a reflection (vimarśa) of it, is still in the form of illumination (prakāśa). In this single point is the locus of reality, the source of the emerging triadic forms, shapes and lines.

Inherent in the bindu, the commentators point out, is its threefold nature, that is, the three capacities of Śakti, desire, knowledge and activity (icchā-, jñāna- and kriyāśaktis) embodied in the deities Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī. These deities are subsumed under a fourth aspect called Ambikā and technically referred to as the śānta or "peaceful". From these come the three gradations of sound

(*paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*) that are responsible for projecting the thirty six categories (*tattvas*) that make up material reality. As Bhāskararāya says,

> Even though the *bindu* cakra [in the center of the *śrīcakra* is only one point] because it has a threefold nature each [nature] respectively has three forms....The three deities created [and] not different from [her] peaceful (*śānta*) [aspect] are [the three *śaktis* of creation] *icchaśakti*, *jñānaśakti* and *kriyāśakti*. The female deities (*śakti*) by name Vāma, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī [which correspond to *icchā*, *jñāna* and *kriyā* are complimented] by the three [corresponding male] forms Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are created as undifferentiated from [the subsuming aspect called] Ambikā. The corresponding deities of speech (*vāgdevatā*) called *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī* are created undifferentiated from [the subsuming aspect called] supreme (*parā*). This is the meaning [of the threefold nature of the *bindu* cakra divided in three ways].[27]

This initial projection of the *bindu* takes the form of the central triangle (*trikoṇa*).[28]

According to Amṛtānanda the projection from *bindu* to *trikoṇa* can be seen as the manifestation of these sets of triadic deities and powers. The projection begins with inner triangle's left line and moves clockwise. Thus each element of the symbolic triads becomes identified with the lines of the *trikoṇa*:

Trikoṇa	Left	Center	Right	**Bindu**
Aspect of the Goddess:	Vāma	Jyeṣṭhā	Raudrī	Ambikā
Consort:	Brahman	Viṣṇu	Śiva	Īśvara
Function:	Creation	Maintenance	Destruction	
Aspect of Śakti:	**icchā**	**jñāna**	**kriyā**	
Stage of Sound:	**paśyantī**	**madhyamā**	**vaikharī**	**parā**
Consciousness State:	waking	dreaming	deep sleep	4th

It is immediately apparent that these identifications parallel those made with the three kūṭas of the śrīvidyā discussed earlier. Śrīvidyā commentators are quick to point out the correspondence of the mantra with the cakra---each is simply an aspect of the other, the mantra the goddess' subtle form, the cakra her transcedent projection as the universe. Hence the fifteen syllables of the mantra in three kūṭas are identified on the śrīcakra following the same clockwise pattern one kūṭa to a side and the ṣoḍaśī, the sixteenth syllable, identified with the bindu.

The logic of the whole system is consistent though its presentation is not. The three sides of the central triangle correspond to each of the three symbolic elements in each set of attributes; the bindu corresponds to the fourth element, or the sixteenth of fifteen. The fourth element encompasses and subsumes the previous three elements. The bindu is also identified with the sixteenth syllable of the śrīvidyā and the sixteenth "hidden" aspect (kalā) of the moon's phases; both of these "sixteenths" serve the same encompassing and subsuming function as the fourth element attached to triads.

Like most Tantric terms, bindu has many meanings, many of which are applied to the symbolism of the bindu within the śrīcakra. Bindu, for example, can refer to semen and be identified with the bindu as the liṅga of Śiva. When the

trikoṇa is identified with the *yoni* of Śakti the sexual symbolism becomes complete: Śiva and Śakti's union is not merely represented by the five intersecting four triangles but in the center of the *śrīcakra* the *bindu* being joined with the central triangle. The bliss of this sexual union is analogous to the permanent spiritual bliss (*ānanda*) attained when the adept realizes the unified nature of reality. Thus the *trikoṇa* assumes the form of the *kāmakalā* or the "aspect of desire", which is usually symbolized by the human form of the female sexual organ. The ritual process of identifying the *trikoṇa* with the actual female organ is at the basis of the so-called *kāmakalā dhyāna*, or meditation on the *kāmakalā*. This practice when interpreted literally prescribes the worship of the exposed female organ as the *trikoṇa*. As a form of spiritual discipline it meets with both sharp criticism and enthusiastic support. Its supporters claim it serves to encourage yogic restraint and embody the symbolic forms while its detractors maintain that the temptations and practices are themselves morally suspect and given to misuse and misunderstanding by outsiders.

As a phonic emanation the *trikoṇa* is considered the resulting combination of the Śiva seed-syllable (*bījākṣara*) *a* and the Śakti seed-syllable *ī*, both residing in unity within the *bindu*. The grammatical result of the *a* plus *ī* combination, the Sanskrit *e*, is itself the seed-syllable of

the trikoṇa. Bhāskararāya points out that this letter e in the devanāgarī script resembles a triangle and thus suggests the yoni.[29]

Viewed in yet another way the bindu is identified with the sixteenth vowel, the visarga, usually represented as aḥ. The visarga encompasses all the other vowels which are also considered forms of Śakti just as the consonants are forms of Śiva. The trikoṇa is then identified with the remaining fifteen vowels; in the śrīcakra pūjā these fifteen vowels are placed five to a side beginning at the base and moving counterclockwise. The fifteen vowels from a to aṃ (i.e., the anusvāra) are also identified with the fifteen nityās or tithis, the deities of the moon's phases (kalās). The visarga according to this pattern is sixteenth kalā and nityā devatā, which is "hidden" from ordinary view. Thus the bindu and trikoṇa symbolize the devolution of sound at the mundane level of speech (i.e., the vaikharī level,) through the identification of the vowels, considered the first sounds of Sanskrit and the first substantive phonic emanation.[30]

While it is also evident that the bindu is the symbolic center of the universe, when the śrīcakra is considered in its three dimensional or meru form, it also becomes the geographical peak (kūṭa) of the universe. Thus the bindu is the seat or throne (pīṭha) of the city of Tripurā atop the

mythical mountain of Sumeru at the center of the universe. Bhāskararāya quoting the Rudrayāmala says:

> "Outside and beyond the countless myriads of world systems, in the centre of the ocean of nectar, more than a thousand crores in extent, in the gem-island (**ratnadvīpa**), a hundred crores in area, the lamp of the world, there is the supreme city of Srividya, three lakhs of **yojanas** in height and adorned with twenty-five walls representsing the twenty-five **tattvas**."...in the **Vidyāratnabhāṣya** [it] is explained as Śrīcakra.[31]

Thus in every ritual reenactment in which the individual body and the universe are identified with the śrīcakra, the bindu of the particular śrīcakra worshipped and the body of the adept become the symbolic center of the universe. Within the body the bindu is usually identified with the uppermost yogic center, the sahasradala or brahmāndhra padma at the top of the skull. The trikoṇa is placed at the base of the spine in the lowest of the physical bodily centers (or cakras), that is, in the mūlādhara. In the course of yogic ritual meditation the two are reunited by methods including breath control, the interidentifcation of phonic essences (i.e., bījākṣaras) and the use of gestures (mudrās). Viewed macrocosmically as the center of the universe, the bindu is the locus of cosmic geography, the center of the physical universe.

When considered as one of the nine sub-cakras the bindu is called sarvānandamāyā, that is, the one "consisting of all bliss" and the trikoṇa, sarvasiddhiprada, the one

"bestowing all perfection".[32] The name of the sub-cakra refers to the achievements gained by worshipping its deities and the activities associating with a manifestation of the mundane world. Each sub-cakra also bears a name for its own presiding deity and the subordinate deities (yoginīs, that is, the female yogis) identified on its parts. The presiding deity of the bindu is the supreme aspect of Tripurā, that is, Mahātripurasundarī who presides, as it were, over all the other "presiding" deities of the sub-cakras. The yoginī of the bindu is referred to as the "supreme of the supreme secret" (parāparārahasya) and is, in fact, the same deity; the presiding deity of the trikoṇa is known as Tripurāmbikā and the fifteen yoginīs are called the "very secret" (atirahasya).[33] These fifteen deities identified with the vowels of Sanskrit are the nityādevatās, the "eternal deities", presiding over the moon's phases. Bhāskararāya concurs:

> The **nityās** are the fifteen Devatās, Kameśvarī to Citrā, who preside over the fifteen days of the lunar months.[34]
>
> The fifteen syllables [of the śrīvidyā] known to all devotees are of the form of **nityās**; thus, the moon's disc, Devī and the fifteen-syllable **mantra** are one. The fifteen syllables belonging to the fifteen **kalās** also become one.[35]
>
> The **Tantrarāja** says, "The fifteen deities are the limbs of Lalitā who is the first [of the sixteen]; as she is endowed with these limbs she is the body, of which they are parts."[36]

The next expansion (prapañca) of the śrīcakra completes

the core of its symbolism; the remaining portions, in a sense, are all viewed as subordinate to the emerging eight minor triangles when combined with the trikoṇa and the bindu.

When the one triangle becomes eight, these eight minor triangles become the vasukoṇa sub-cakra. Just as the bindu is said to encompass all the remaining parts of the śrīcakra, so the vasukoṇa, at a more mundane level when taken with the trikoṇa, encompasses all the symbols, deities and powers of the remaining sub-cakras. The vasukoṇa's presiding deity is Tripurāsiddhā and its yoginīs (identified one to a triangle) are called "secret" (rahasya). These yoginīs are actually the well-known "deities of speech", the vāgdevatās: Vāsinī, Kāmeśvarī, Modinī, Vimalā, Āruṇā, Jayanī, Sarveśvarī and Kaulinī. These eight subordinate deities are the source of the mātṛkās, the Little Mothers, identified with all the letters and sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. The mātṛkās embody the basic linguistic structure of Sanskrit and are the first phonic emanations of Brahman at the mundane level; they include, then, not only the sixteen vowels (which come first) but the thirty-two (or thirty-five) consonants.[37] As Bhāskararāya notes:

> ...the fifty-one letters (**A** to **Kṣa**) are her form, **varṇa**, the letters, **rūpa**, indicate (her)..."Just as the supreme Śiva is twofold as Śakti and Śiva, so this Mātṛkā Devī herself shines in two. The vowels indicate one form of **śakti**, the others (consonants) indicate Śiva. Thus the [Devī] of

vidyā under the form of letters indicates Śiva."[38]

The vāgdevatās are the collective source for the matṛkās identified on the remaining sub-cakras. Thus with each of the vāgdevatās is associated one of the traditional groupings of Sanskrit letters, so that with Vāsinī is associated the sixteen vowels, with Kāmeśvarī the kavarga (ka, kha, ga, gha and na), and so forth, such that the forty-eight (or fifty-two) letters are accounted for under the eight vāgdevatā yoginis. The vāgdevatās, by subsuming the matṛkās identified with speech, subordinate the remaining portions of the sub-cakras. The sub-cakras, by being associated with a particular Sanskrit letter, are nothing other than simple mātṛkā aspects of the vāgdevatās. The sounds themselves whether grouped together as the vāgdevatās or taken individually as mātṛkās identified with a part of each sub-cakra are not mere sounds. They are deities in phonic aspects subordinated to the presiding deity of the whole cakra; as substances issuing forth from this one source and gradually assuming a mundane form (such as their particular sound in Sankrit) they are aspects of consciousness, not insentient entities. As part of the śrīcakra these sounds and deities are part of a deliberate design of the macrocosmic Consciousness bringing itself into particular forms. For the Śrīvidyā traditionalist the world

issues forth in an emerging cosmic structure, the *śrīcakra*, in which phonic emanations and the structure itself arise in complimentary, parallel forms. Creation is an immanent form of the Creator and transcendence is measured in degrees rather than in substance.

When the *trikoṇa* is included, the eight minor triangles of the *vasukoṇa* embrace not only all the sound sources of the manifest world but all the other powers and deities associated with the *śrīcakra*'s remaining seven sub-cakras. In these nine triangles (that is, the eight of the *vasukoṇa* plus the one *trikoṇa*) are all the powers and attributes of the nine major triangles and the nine sub-cakras formed in intersection.

Thus the eight minor triangles of the *vasukoṇa* and the central *trikoṇa* are identified with the nine *Yonis* (literally, wombs) which are the aspects of Śakti responsible for acquired and latent mental impressions (*saṁskāras*) entering into the mundane, karmic world.[39] The deities of the *śrīcakra* also serve to identify aspects of the personality from its source in the Self (*ātman*) to its more mundane and manifest aspects. The *Yonis* are the source of all the remaining sub-cakras, including their presiding *yoginī* deities, the accomplishments associated with their worship and the material and spiritual aspects of the mundane world each reflects. As Bhāskararāya says:

> The nine Yoni cakras...arise [from the intersection of] the two [major] Śakti triangles with one [major] Vahni [or Śiva] triangle. The three lines of each [major] triangle thus joined together are the nine lines and [produce by their intersection] the forms of angles [which number] nine only. Therefore, [it can be said that] She produces the nine yoginīs [identified respectively with each of the eight minor vasukoṇa triangles and the inner trikoṇa]. The sense expressed here is that in these nine [sub-] cakras [composed of the eight vasukoṇas plus the one trikoṇa] are [subtlely present] the nine [sets of] yoginīs beginning with prakaṭa [that is, all the yoginīs of the sub-cakras making up the śrīcakra] and that these [sets of yoginīs] are present here in the form of angles.[40]

The vasukoṇa's association with the vāgdevatās and the nine Yonis gives it a crucial place in the śrīcakra as a portrait of creation. Creation as we know it emerges at this level of the cakra, that is, as it is understood through ordinary speech and as an emanation of sound. As Bhāskararāya remarks, all the rest of creation is a sub-set of the activity of the deities of the vasukoṇa and trikoṇa.[41] The vasukoṇa itself is known as the cakra which "removes all disease" (sarvarogahara).[42] This is explained in the words of a contemporary adept,

> This means all forms of disease but actually it refers to ignorance (avidyā). This is the disease that afflicts all of us and if removed we are liberated.[43]

The vasukoṇa's presiding deity is Tripurasiddhā, the aspect of Tripurā that "bestows all forms of accomplishment", a seemingly appropriate name for the deity

intended to subsume those that follow.

The vasukoṇa and trikoṇa, adding up to nine triangles, also fits the patterns of symbolism seen in the śrīcakra as a whole. As nine triangles these two sub-cakras are both a microcosm of the five plus four major triangles and the nine sub-cakras that make up the complete cakra. In these nine minor triangles is the śrīcakra in its reduced form and, as Bhāskararāya notes, under special circumstances the worship of the whole śrīcakra can be taken as the worship of only these nine. He says:

> In the summarized form of the [śrīcakra] pūjā, at the time of emergency (āpatkālika) we understand from the Tantras an injunction [to perform the pūjā] merely beginning from the vasukoṇa...to the bindu.[44]

At the next stage of creation's devolution the śrīcakra assumes the form of ten triangles called the [sub-] cakra that "effects all protection" (sarvarakṣākāra); its presiding deity is known as Tripuramālinī. This sub-cakra is known less technically as the inner ten triangles (antardaśāra) in order to distinguish it from the next sub-cakra of ten triangles known as the outer ten (bahirdaśāra).[45] The two sets of ten minor triangles are usually taken as a pair though each bears its own distinctive name, presiding deity and set of yoginīs. The yoginīs of the inner ten are called nigarbhā, an esoteric

term meaning "hidden" but contrasted to rahasya or "secret" which suggests a greater degree of secrecy. They also bear the name devī, or goddess, as part of their description, suggesting that at this level of mundane reality the identifiable, anthropomorphic forms begin to emerge. The particular power and description of the deity is also the siddhi or form of accomplishment that its worship confers. It should be emphasized how these characteristics portray the active and worldly nature of the deities and how this sub-cakra, like those that follow it, reflects an increasingly more manifest form of reality. The names of the yoginīs and their meanings are listed below, they are identified in the śrīcakra worship in a counterclockwise pattern beginning at the base triangle:

Outer Ten Minor Triangles: **Sarvarakṣākāracakra**

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Sarvajñā(devī)	Omniscience
2. Sarvaśakti	All powers
3. Sarvaiśvaryapradā	Conferring all [forms of] empowerment
4. Sarvajñānamāyī	Consisting of all knowledge
5. Sarvavyādhivināśinī	Destroying all sickness
6. Sarvādhārasvarūpini	Form of all Supports (an esoteric sense referring to the bodily centers according to kuṇḍalinī yoga)
7. Sarvapāpaharā	Remover of all sins
8. Sarvānandamayī	Consisting of all bliss
9. Sarvarakṣāsvarūpinī	Form of all protection
10. Sarvepiṣṭaphalapradā	Conferring all desired fruits

The relationship of the inner and outer sets of ten

minor triangles with the coming forth of the mundane physical world is also clear from another set of identifications. Quoting an unidentified passage from the Tantras Bhāskararāya explains how the two sets of ten minor triangles symbolize the material essence of the physical world the emerging from the more subtle phonic form:

> The two sets of ten [minor] triangles [within the śrīcakra] have the form of effulgence (sphuratrupa) which depends upon illumination (prakāśa) [of the] ten elements (bhūta) and the ten essences (tanmātra).[46]

This remark accounts for both sets of ten minor triangles but leads to a some confusion since there is no indication as to what Bhāskararāya means by the five "subtle" elements. Amṛtānanda remarking on YH, 1.16 says that the elements (bhūta), earth, water, fire, air and space have the nature of Śakti while their essences, the tanmātras, smell, taste, form, touch and sound, have the nature of Śiva. He does not make these usual five elements and their corresponding essences into ten nor does he clearly identify them with either of the sub-cakras. It would seem he has the inner set of ten in mind. The outer set, he says, has the form of effulgence (sphurat) while both are the forms of the senses and the their respective objects, numbering ten. He mention that the second set is the form of the deity Krodhiṣa, the Lord of Anger, identified with the letter ka and also with the ten Sanskrit

letters beginning with the consonant ka. This is repeated by Bhāskararāya without his including the consonants following ka but the discussion does not clarify which set of ten minor triangles Amṛtānanda associates with the elements and their essences.[47] The meaning, Amṛtānanda says, is that the two sets of ten minor triangles are in the midst of the light of the inner three cakras and as "light" have the nature of illumination (prakāśa) and reflection (vimarśa); the inner set is like a pure light and the outer set a shadow.[48] Though Srīvidyā's historical interpreters have taken the two sub-cakras of ten minor triangles as a pair they have seemingly not agreed on the relationship of their symbolism. They have also distinguished the two sub-cakras, each with its own symbolism and meanings.

The outer ten minor triangles are known as the cakra that "accomplishes all aims" (sarvārthasādhaka), its presiding deity is known as Tripuraśrī and its yoginis are called kulottīrṇa, literally, "crossing beyond the kula". According to the TT, the ten triangles represent the ten vital breaths.[49] The yoginīs, like those of the inner ten triangles, are ritually placed on the śrīcakra counterclockwise from the base; their meanings reflect the emergence of increasing more worldly and mundane qualities in the universe.

Inner Ten Minor Triangles: **Sarvārthasādhakacakra**

Yoginī	Meaning and Attribute
1. Sarvasiddhipradā(devī)	Conferring all powers
2. Sarvasampatpradā	Conferring all profit
3. Sarvapriyaṅkarī	Making all beloved
4. Sarvamangalakāriṇī	Making everything auspcious
5. Sarvakāmapradā	Conferring all desires
6. Sarvaduḥkhavimocinī	Removing all suffering
7. Sarvamṛtyuprasamanī	Mitigating all [forms of] death
8. Sarvavighnanivāriṇī	Removing all obsta les
9. Sarvāṅgasundarī	Beautiful in all limbs
10. Sarvasaubhāgyadāyinī	Imparting all prosperity

The next and last set of minor triangles number fourteen and are commonly referred to by the technical term manvaśra. The sub-cakra "imparts all prosperity" (sarvasaubhāgyadāyaka), has Tripuravāsini for its presiding deity and calls its yoginīs "traditional" (sampradāya). Its triangles are sometimes identified with the fourteen sublte channels (nāḍis) of the Yogic nervous system though the more common meaning is given by Bhāskararāya. Following this view the fourteen are held to be a reflection of the two sets of ten:

> And from these [ten essences (tanmātra)] arose the fourteen, namely, the five organs of action, the five organs of knowledge and the four inner organs.[50]

These "organs" are, in fact, the physical and mental capacities that make up the human personality. They include the physical limbs, their corresponding capacities and the four aspects of the mind.[51] At the level of the manvaśra sub-cakra the plane of mundane existence is reached,

considered the substantive emanation emerging from the subtle aspects of Śakti and a reflective form of those aspects directly preceeding it.

The yoginīs of the sub-cakra are specifically referred to as śaktis, powers, and each yoginī's name specifies the accomplishment (siddhi) associated with its worship. The key point is the multidimensionality of the yoginī's powers and their role in the spiritual discipline. From the worldly perspective this entails an extraordinary kind of power and influence over natural and social events. In this way Śrīvidyā is quintessentially Tantric. Tantrics assume that spiritual powers acquired through their extraordinary (and initiated) disciplines will have worldly and visible effects as well as spiritual dimensions. Since these powers (siddhi) may be used for any purpose and are considered an early acquisition in the practice of the discipline another reason for the strong emphasis on secrecy and initiation is evident. For example, the power to influence (sarvavaśaṅkari) suggests both a physical ability and the spiritual capacity to effect change in oneself and others, while the power to confuse (sarvamohini) suggests the ability to cast off hindrances such as the ill will of others. But the power (siddhi) itself is considered unregulated except by the will of the adept who has mastered it. Thus it can, in fact, be used for any end. As one

contemporary adept put it:

> Śrīvidyā is committed only to noble spiritual aims but like any form of power can be corrupted. As a spiritual discipline we believe it truly does give what might be called supernormal abilities. These are our responsibility and we must be committed to use them only for good. This is one reason why we are so careful in accepting people to the highest forms of our discipline. But we should keep in mind that these are siddhis acquired at the early stages of practice, they are placed on the outer portions of the cakra. We consider them not the most important aims but only secondary to accomplishing the spiritual goal.[52]

The last point of this remark is especially noteworthy because it reflects an attitude shared by nearly all contemporary adepts in south India. While the acquisition of powers is taken very seriously it is not usually considered a primary aim of spiritual practice. Like all Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts do not separate worldly from spiritual accomplishments perhaps because they so strongly identify the conventional world as ultimately identical to Brahman. To know the ultimate truth gives one supreme power over all its manifestations. But in contrast to other Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts, at least contemporary ones, have underplayed the importance of power for worldly gain or influence. Another adept stated the attitude succinctly:

> The siddhi is there, we may use it or not. But it is not to be gained for its own sake. It is just part of our practice. The great siddha is one who chooses to use it only when necessary.[53]

The powers associated with the yoginīs of the fourteen

minor triangles have both positive and negative aspects: in other words, positive attributes are used to attract or acquire certain desirable powers and negative (or negatively stated) attributes to protect or to expel undesirable ones. The deities of the fourteen minor triangles are:

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Sarvasaṃkṣobhiṇī(śakti)	Power to make everything restless
2. Sarvavidrāviṇī	Power to disperse
3. Sarvākarṣiṇī	Power to attract all
4. Sarvāhlādinī	Power of conferring delight
5. Sarvamohinī	Power of confusing
6. Sarvastaṃbhinī	Power to sustain
7. Sarvajṛṁbhinī	Power to expand
8. Sarvavaśaṅkarī	Power to influence
9. Sarvarañjinī	Power to please
10. Sarvonmādinī	Power to intoxicate
11. Sarvārthasādhinī	Power to accomplish all aims
12. Sarvasaṃpatpūriṇī	Power to fulfill
13. Sarvamantramayī	Power consisting of all mantras
14. Sarvadvandvakṣayaṅkarī	Power to destroy duality

Following the fourteen triangles are the two sets of lotus petals. The inner eight are the (sub-) cakra which "makes everything restless" (sarvasaṃkṣobhakāra) and has for its presiding deity Tripurasundarī; its yoginīs are referred to as "more concealed" (guptatara). The outer sixteen lotuses make up the sub-cakra that "fulfills all hopes" (sarvāśāparipūraka); its presiding deity is Tripuresi and its yoginīs are called "concealed" (gupta).

The yoginīs of the eight lotus petals display the two-dimensional significance of the śrīcakra's elements perhaps

better than any other sub-cakra; they are both subordinate deities with their own qualities and powers, and spiritual attributes of the adept who worships them. The meanings of the names are physical descriptions of female deities (devīs as they are called) and aesthetic qualities acquired in the course of spiritual discipline.

All eight yoginīs are called ananga, literally, "limbless" and thus the goddesses are the "limbless ones" who, for example, hold "flowers" (anaṅgakūsuma) or "take delight in love" (anangamādanatura). As their name indicates they are incoporeal deities with the capacity to affect events in the material world. As descriptive attributes these names convey a sense of aesthetic beauty that is characteristically Indian, in the more esoteric sense they suggest the kinds of physical powers and abilities associated with feminine deities.

One power, for example, frequently associated in Śrīvidya literature with the mastery of mantra and yantra worship and suggested here by one of the yoginīs is the ability to attract women. Contemporary adepts with traditionally conservative social values express deep reservations about this fact but nonetheless must at least recognize its repeated emphasis in important sources.[54] In explanation they say that kāma, sensual pleasure, as one of the human aims (puruṣārtha) is a legitimate and necessary

aspect of human existence provided it is within the "appropriate" contexts of marriage. These same adepts reject the literal practice of kāmakalādhyāna. Other adepts accepting the ritual use of the pañcamakāras including sexual intercourse (outside marriage) reject the idea that such ritual sex is a form of kāma in the ordinary sense since it is not directed towards mere physical satisfaction.

The translation of the yoginī's names given in the list below focuses on the suggestive sense of the acquired attribute rather than the more obvious sense of the yoginī's description.[55]

Yoginī	Meaning and Attribute
1. Anaṅgakusumā(devī)	Of Limitless Fire (or Flowers)
2. Anaṅgamekhalā	Of Limitless Girth
3. Anaṅgamadanā	Of Limitless Delight
4. Anaṅgamadanāturā	Of Limitless Love (Delight in Love)
5. Anaṅgarekhā	Of Limitless Lines (or Measure)
6. Anaṅgaveginī	Of Limitless Energy
7. Anaṅgaṅkuśā	Of Limitless Restraint
8. Anaṅgamālinī	Of Limitless Garlands (or Beauty)

The yoginīs of the sixteen lotus petals bear the epithet ākarṣiṇī indicating the power of attraction. Like the yoginīs of the eight lotuses these deities are considered primarily worldly powers and achievements which, according to a modern adept, "are to be used for facilitating the spiritual path".[56] Ākarṣiṇī can also refer to a magnet or any instrument that attracts; in this

case the deities serve this precise function, they are the instruments for attracting various powers and qualities. In addition, they convey a sharpening or heightening of existing physical or mental attributes. The yoginīs are also called nityakalādevīs, that is, goddesses of the "eternal phases", referring to their identification with the sixteen kalās or phases in the monthly lunar cycle.

The consistency exhibited at the mantric level is an important feature in systematizing the design of ritual discipline. In the case of these yoginīs, for example, the bījākṣaras are the sixteen Sanskrit vowels, as are the bījas of the nityadevatās placed around the central trikoṇa to which they correspond.[57] The trikoṇa's yoginīs are the nityā deities themselves while here, farther away from the center of the śrīcakra, they are the nityā's attributes. At the level of primary phonic emanation the deity and attribute are identical and it becomes evident from their positioning on the śrīcakra that the attribute or power associated with the yoginīs is naturally subordinate. The yoginīs of the sixteen lotus petals provide the best example of the way the śrīcakra's design structures reality through the placement of its deities: the closer to the center, the more basic and less material the aspect of the divinity. A contemporary adept explained a few of these "attractive powers" this way:

Kāmākarṣiṇī means that whatever is desired will become available. The attractions of the senses have to do with these becoming pleasurable aspects of the adept's experience but can also mean that he has this quality. For example, the gandhākarṣiṇī means that the adept attracts such pleasurable fragrances, that he can smell things others cannot and that he himself always has a pleasant smell. This is not unlike some of the qualities of the Buddha whose body was attractive in all these ways.[58]

At the mantric level Amṛtānanda equates the sixteen and eight lotuses with the sixteen vowels and the consonants. These lotus petals, he says, are the incipient point of the articulation of sound, that is, they are the vaikharī stage of sound.[59]

Below is the complete list of the yoginīs of the sixteen lotus petals (ṣoḍaśadalkamala).

Yoginī	Meaning and Attribute
1. Kāmākarṣiṇī	Attracting what is Desired
2. Buddhyākarṣiṇī	Attracting Intelligence
3. Ahaṃkārakarṣiṇī	Attraction of the Ego
4. Śabdākarṣiṇī	Attracion of Sound
5. Sparśakarṣiṇī	Attraction of Touch
6. Rūpākarṣiṇī	Attracting Form
7. Rasākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Taste
8. Gandhākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Smell
9. Cittākarṣiṇī	Attraction of Mind
10. Dhāryākarṣiṇī	Attracting Stability (Courage)
11. Smṛtyākarṣiṇī	Attracting Recollection
12. Nāmākarṣiṇī	Attracting Names
13. Bījākarṣiṇī	Attracting Seed(-syllables)
14. Ātmākarṣiṇī	Attracting the Self
15. Amṛtākarṣiṇī	Attracting Immortality
16. Sarīrākarṣiṇī	Attraction of the Body

Following the sixteen lotuses the dhyānaśloka of the

śrīcakra introduces the term vṛttatraya or three circles. These three circles, usually surrounding the lotus petals, are the subject of much controversy within Srividya tradition, controversy which in historical terms has precipitated an internal sectarian split. The universally accepted interpretation of the three circles is made by Śivānanda in his Subhāgodayavāsanā; here he likens the three circles to the goddess's three eyes which have the form of the moon (soma), the sun (sūrya) and fire (agni).[60] This interpretation is then used by other authors in order to identify these three forms with the three sides of the trikoṇa. According to Amṛtānanda, the three circles have the form of three seeds (bījatraya), that is, they are the three primary reflections of the physical earth (bhūbimba) as it emerges from the three levels of sound, viz., paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī.[61]

The major historical commentators do not speak of the three traditions (sampradāyas) that interpret the significance of the circles, though several contemporary ritual manuals (paddhatis) make these formal distinctions upheld in oral traditions.[62] According to oral traditions the three sampradāyas maintain distinctive views; the so-called Hayagrīva sampradāya, named after the avatāra of Viṣṇu involved in the transmission of Śrīvidyā works such as the Lalitāsahasranāma, maintains that the three circles

surrounding the lotuses should not be present; the Ānandabhairava *sampradāya*, though it figures the circles into the *śrīcakra*'s construction, does not attribute to it any *yoginīs* and consequently makes no ritual offerings; the Dakṣiṇamūrti *sampradāya*, which presumably follows a tradition linked to the "south-facing" Śiva in his aspect as guru, maintains the presence of the circles, a list of *yoginīs* and their attributes. According to the prescriptions of the Dakṣiṇamūrti *sampradāya* the outermost circle is imagined as white in color, associated with the power of deception (*māyā*) and identified with the thirty-four *yoginīs* corresponding to the complete set of consecutive consonants in Sanskrit (according to the fifty-one consonant scheme) placed (in an otherwise unspecified manner) on the outer circle in a counterclockwise direction; the middle circle is red in color, associated with the seed-syllables and identified with the sixteen *yoginīs* corresponding to the Sanskrit vowels; the third, inner circle is black in color, associated with the material creation (*prakṛti*) and identified with the sixteen *nityadevatās* and the corresponding vowels as seed-syllables. The deity is Kāmeśvarī is added to the usual sixteen *nityās*. This female form of Kāmeśvara is the aspect usually considered the subsuming sixteenth figure in this set of fifteen elements.

Contemporary adepts divide according to these "traditions" even when they were not aware of the oral lore surrounding them. This is the case if only because the three sampradāyas cover every possible interpretation. But to those aware of these names and the different meanings attributed to them this is an issue of no small significance. As one adept explains,

> Everything about the śrīcakra is purposeful and there is no margin for error. Nothing about its form can be accidental because it is the shape of creation itself. If the vṛttatraya is part of the cakra then there must be a reason. According to our [Hayagrīva] sampradāya the vṛttatrāya should not be there because it has no place in the pūjā. We follow the interpretation of Bhāskararāya.[63]

Bhāskararāya argues in the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya that the mention of the three circles refers not to the usual vṛttatraya outside the sixteen lotuses but to the three circles that demarcate the two sets of lotuses from the other parts of the śrīcakra. He says:

> Thus these three maṇḍalas or circles (vṛttāni)...cause auspiciousness, that is,...they ornament (maṇḍayanti) the Mothers [who are identified on part of the śrīcakra). The meaning [of this passage] is that the sricakra that is fit for worship (kāryākṣama) should consist of the two sets of lotus petals between which are the three circles...[64]

The alternative, according to Bhāskararāya, is to interpret scripture as referring to the three lines that make up the outer gateways of the śrīcakra. This

interpretation accounts for the placement of the term vṛttatraya in the śrīcakra's dhyānaśloka, that is, between the sixteen petals and the outer gateways. Among historical commentators only Bhāskararāya makes mention of this controversy and offers this interpretation of the śrīcakra's vṛttatraya but he does not explicitly state that he belongs to the Dakṣiṇamūrti sampradāya nor is there any indication of his being aware of this formal division. He is aware of the vṛttatraya interpreted as outer circles but rejects this view and presents his own opinion not merely as a plausible alternative but as the correct interpretation.[65]

Curiously, not all contemporary groups claiming to be part of Bhāskararāya's spiritual legacy are aware of his views since their own śrīcakras include the three outside circles. Even more baffling is the presence of the three surrounding circles on the actual śrīcakra shown to me in the village of Bhāskararājapuram, the cakra claimed by its owner to have been Bhāskararāya's personal ritual object. Given Bhāskararāya's strong opinion the authenticity of this śrīcakra is suspect and can be counted among the many mysteries surrounding his biography.[66] One adept claiming his lineage to be descended from Bhāskararāya stated that while tradition rejects the vṛttatraya as having a ritual role it does not necessarily reject the presence of the three circles. In support of this interpretation he cited

the Nityotsava of Umānandanātha which includes the three circles outside the sets of lotus petals. Rāmeśvara, however, believes that Bhāskararāya supported a five line theory (the two inner separating circles plus the outer three circles).[67]

But the majority view in south Indian Śrīvidyā supports the Ānandabhairava sampradāya which includes the three surrounding circles but prescribes no pūjā and offers no textual or historical interpretation of them. Only rarely is the śrīcakra actually seen in contemporary India without the surrounding circles. But the lack of a ritual context for the vṛttatraya has not gone unnoticed by adepts who view the śrīcakra as a perfectly consistent ritual construction. According to one adept:

> The circles are a boundary between the more subtle parts of the cakra and the ordinary world. This is the only purpose they serve, there is no pūjā for them.[68]

According to another:

> There must have once been a significance to the circles and a pūjā for them. I do not know of one now. And if such a tradition exists I would not follow it because it is not the tradition as taught to me by my own teacher. My teacher did not explain the circles and I am led to believe that they have their own purpose which does not concern our worship.[69]

According to other contemporary adepts identifying themselves with the Dakṣiṇamūrti sampradāya the three circles of the vṛttatraya are another secret aspect of the

<u>śrīcakra</u>, so secret in fact that the significance has been lost in most lineages. The tradition is not discussed in historical texts, these adepts claim, either because it was not known to the writers or because of its secrecy. It is difficult to determine the origins of this oral tradition of three <u>sampradāyas</u> or when it might have begun. By its absence in the works of such comparatively late figures as Bhāskararāya (who is usually noted for his encyclopedic knowledge) or Lakṣmīdhara (who is quick to point out sectarian differences of opinion) we are led to believe that it is likely a recent explanation. This would undoubtedly be disputed by contemporary Dakṣiṇamūrti <u>sampradāya</u> traditionalists.

The outermost gateways of the <u>śrīcakra</u> are known by several names, none more common than <u>bhūpura</u> or <u>bhūgṛha</u>, literally the "city" or "house of the earth". Composed of three parallel lines the major issue concerning its construction is whether its "doorways" (<u>dvara</u>) are open or closed. Amṛtānanda maintains it can be drawn in both open and closed fashions and Bhāskararāya concurs.[70] Rāmeśvara adds that the <u>bhūpura</u> may be drawn with or without doors which may be composed of one or three lines. Those who follow the tradition of the <u>PKS</u>, he adds, should not use a <u>śrīcakra</u> without the open gateways.[71] Rāmeśvara remarks how

Umānandanātha specifies open gateways and a three line composition for the bhūpura but criticizes him for maintaining the vṛttatraya as three outer circles without an explanation. At this point Rāmeśvara makes the rather astonishing claim that Umānanda may not, in fact, be Bhāskararāya's pupil as tradition suggests because his views are so drastically inconsistent with the Master's.[72] Lakṣmīdhara too accepts the open gateways and maintains that Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, 1.31 supports this view.[73] Perhaps it is because there is no disagreement concerning the yoginīs of the bhūpura that its precise configuration has not led to more important ritual distinctions.

The bhūpura's technical name means the "delusion of the three worlds" (trailokyamohana), its presiding deity is Tripurā and its yoginīs are termed prakaṭa or explicit. Amṛtānanda gives a general interpretation by linking this sub-cakra with the two sets of lotus petals. The three taken together, he says, represent the threefold creation in its explict forms; to understand their collective significance is to reach the first level of spiritual attainment, the pūrvāmnaya.[74]

Vidyānanda in the Artharatnāvali also associates a hierarchy of spiritual levels (āmnaya) with each sub-cakra.[75] He observes that in the discussion of these spiritual levels there is a distinction made between the

Kāmarāja and Lopamudrā traditions. The spiritual levels, he says, are three and mark consecutive stages of realization. For each level there is a group of three sub-cakras; realization is achieved when each group of sub-cakras is ritually worshipped and its meaning internalized. The spiritual levels, like the sub-cakras, follow the dissolution method (samhārakrama) of analysis since they are the result of the ritual worship of the śrīcakra.[76] According to the Kāmarāja tradition, Vidyānanda says, the bhūpura and the two sets of lotus petals form the first group called the pūrvāmnaya or "eastern" (or "upper"); these represent the "dissolution" (samhāra) aspect of divinity, mark the first level of achievement and reflect the most mundane level of reality. The next three sub-cakras, that is, the fourteen triangles and two sets of ten, form the second group and represent the second spiritual level called the dakṣiṇāmnaya or "southern" (or "right") and the "maintenance" aspect (sthiti) of divinity. The third spiritual level, called the pāścyāmnaya or the "western" (or "left"), is achieved when the last three sub-cakras are taken as a group, that is, the vasukoṇa of eight triangles, the trikoṇa and the bindu; these represent the "creation" aspect (śṛṣṭi) of divinity. There is, as one would suspect, a fourth level subsuming the three that correspond to the physical śrīcakra; this is called the uttarāmnaya or

"northern" and is presided over by Śiva and Śakti.[77] The Lopamudrā tradition, Vidyānanda maintains, reverses the order and significance of the groupings. Since none of the Lopamudrā hādimata followers take up the issue it is impossible to know if Vidyānanda's sectarian interpretations represent historical tradition. It is significant because it is one of the rare instances of a theoretical distinction between kādi and hādi offering at least superficial evidence of more than simple mantra based differences.

Implicit in the broader interpretation of Vidyānanda, Jayaratha and Lakṣmīdhara is that the bhūpura and two sets of lotus petals are not as seminal to the śrīcakra's meaning as are the sub-cakras composed of triangles.[78] This follows the common general description of the śrīcakra as composed of forty-three triangles without mention of the other portions and conforms to its depiction in certain temple contexts.[79] Others, however, like the author of the Śrīvidyāratnasūtras, maintain that the śrīcakra defines the concept of "cakra" because it is not merely triangles or petals but a combination of triangles and petals.[80]

The yoginīs of the bhūpura number twenty-eight in three groups assigned to specific places on each of its three lines.[81] The first group of ten yoginīs comprises the ten siddhis or spiritual accomplishments, the so-called aṇimādi group.[82] The Śāktas add to the usual Tantric group of eight

siddhis two more: bhuktisiddhi, the power of enjoyment, and sarvakāmasiddhi, the power over all desires.[83] These extraordinary accomplishments the majority of contemporary adepts consider accretions to the incipient stages of spiritual realization. As one adept explained:

> The siddhis are only the first level of achievement and are not actually important. Their importance is only in facilitating other progress. But with these siddhis it is easy to see why the teaching is kept so secret. If these are the first level of accomplishment then it is important to see to it that they are acquired by persons who see them in the proper perspective. Like all forms of power they can easily be misused. This is the case with all aspects of Śrīvidyā---its power is part of its very nature as a teaching and should be kept under strict control. For a person with no control over their senses or with the desire to use such siddhis for their own gain or others' harm, there is much potential danger. Therefore we keep th teaching secret. So great is the accomplishments at higher level that these siddhis are considered the lowest stage of development. The responsibility for giving the teaching only to responsible persons lies with the guru. This is why the guru is like a god. He can determine by his own powers who is truly qualified.[84]

The first set of prakaṭa yoginīs, the siddhis, are give a role on the bhūpura by all except Jayaratha among the major historical commentators.[85] They are:

Yoginī	**Meaning and Attribute**
1. Aṇimāsiddhi	Power to make Minute
2. Laghimāsiddhi	Power to become Light
3. Mahimāsiddhi	Power to become Great (in size)
4. Īśitvasiddhi	Power of Superiority
5. Vaśitvasiddhi	Power to Control
6. Prākāmyasiddhi	Power of Irresistable Will

7.	Bhuktisiddhi	Power of Enjoyment
8.	Icchāsiddhi	Power to gain one's Desires
9.	Prāptisiddhi	Power to Obtain anything
10.	Sarvakāmasiddhi	Power over all Desires

Śrīvidyā adepts, unlike other Śāktas and Tantrics, do not give prominence to the role of these siddhis in the acquisition of bodily immortality often associated with siddha traditions. The extraordinary capacities that these powers suggest, however, are not neglected. Virtually the entire second chapter of the NSA is devoted to the performance of śrīcakra rituals directed towards such things as attracting women, curing illness, imposing one's will on others and even becoming invisible.[86] These extraordinary rites involving the śrīcakra are associated directly with the acquisition of the ten siddhis. Contemporary adepts, reflecting a more conservative interpretation usually frown on the use of siddhis for worldly purposes. As one put it:

> The siddhis are acquired not to be used for any ordinary purpose. Once acquired after long practice of the complete sādhana they are like a bank account, if you use the power it is to some degree expended; if you simply leave it in the account it draws interest for when you may truly need it.[87]

The siddhis, however, serve another role in Śrīvidyā tradition, namely, to affirm the greatness of particular personalities and to assert the superiority of the tradition over others. Bhāskararāya, for example, is one such figure

attributed supernormal feats. On one occasion it is said that he failed to show respect to a mendicant as he passed the household. This so infuriated the sannyāsi that he wished to condemn Bhāskararāya's actions publicly as disrespectful of the Dharmic roles of householder and renunciate. Bhāskararāya rejoined that the traditional obesience would endanger the sannyāsi's life. This further angered the sannyāsi who then challenged Bhāskararāya to prove his power. Bhāskararāya asked the mendicant to lay before him his begging bowl and staff. As he prostrated before these objects they broke into pieces. The sannyāsi was, of course, suitably humbled. The story goes on, however, to moralize that such behavior towards a mendicant would set a bad example for others and, not wishing to be the cause of a degeneration in Dharma, Bhāskararāya thereafter retired to the inside of his house whenever the mendicant approached.[88] The story exemplifies a key issue in Śrīvidyā's broader interpretation: power is not used unnecessarily or for the sake of spectacle. It is not merely Bhāskararāya's humility that contemporary adepts emphasize but his attitude towards the exercise of power and authority. As one contemporary adept said:

> The siddha never shows what he is capable of doing unless it serves another's purpose. Unless it can be turned towards the welfare of others, he rarely will do anything to draw attention to himself. He is concerned with higher matters. Egoistic displays are not part of his spiritual

make-up.[89]

The "little mothers" (mātṛkās), the yoginīs of the middle line of the bhūpura, differ in number according to sectarian Tantric traditions and texts. In Śrīvidyā they are consistently enumerated as eight: Brahmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varāhī, Mahedrī (also called Indranī in some sources), Camuṇḍā and Mahālakṣmī. The first seven of the mātṛkās are not disputed in any tradition though their earliest mention, in the Devīmāhātmyā, lists nine by excluding Mahālakṣmī and adding Śivadūtī and Kālī.[90] As minor deities they are found throughout Śākta literature and are frequently aligned with the eight aspects of Bhairava, as is the case in the Jñānārṇava Tantra.[91] The primary function of the mātṛkās is to preside over the eight groups (varga) of letters comprising the Sanskrit alphabet (cf., Svaccnanda Tantra, 1.33f.) while the Brahmayāmala (Chapter 2) states that they themselves issue forth from the vowels.[92] Given the numerous and early textual references to the mātṛkās in Śākta speculations it is little wonder they have found a place on the śrīcakra.[93] Jayaratha, though he fails to mention the other two sets of yoginīs usually assigned to the bhūpura, does not omit the mātṛkās. As it has been observed, Śrīvidyā tradition generally exhibits strong tendencies towards inclusion especially with regard to features prominent in Kaula and Kashmiri Śaiva

literatures; the placement of the mātṛkās on the śrīcakra is one example of this sharing of symbols and concepts.

The ten yoginīs of the bhūpura's innermost line are the ten mudrās or hand gestures, the first nine of which are common to all the Sakta schools, the tenth being special to Srividya. The significance of mudrās has been discussed eloquently elsewhere and remarks here are limited to their importance in Śrīvidyā.[94]

The first nine mudrās are identified respectively with the nine sub-cakras (following the samhārakrama), the tenth is reserved for Tripura as the supreme deity. According to contemporary ritual manuals (paddhatis), the nine mudrās are shown either following the naming of the yoginīs of each sub-cakra during the pūjā or at its conclusion.[95] Certain of the nine mudrās, such as yonimudrā, are also shown at other points in ritual to effect or "seal" results. The mudrā is to the body what the mantra is to speech: the subtle expression of transcendence made manifest. The meditative act is complete only when the mudrī and mantra are in corresponding harmony, the one often considered dependent upon the other to insure efficacy.[96]

In śrīcakra worship the mudrās are first worshipped collectively as yoginīs and then individually as the presiding deities of the sub-cakras and finally as the supreme Tripurā. They represent the powers of these

presiding sub-cakra deities and are considered another form of the deity. In some cases the mudrās resemble the figures the name suggests, for example, the mahāṅkuśa mudrā imitates the elephant goad, a symbol of influence and control, that is part of the iconography of Lalitā, Gaṇeṣa and other deities; the yoni mudrā represents the female organ while the trikhaṇḍa mudrā, the special mudrā of Tripurā, is so-called because it has three distinctive parts corresponding to the threefold nature of the goddess as she manifests in the conventional world.

It would appear that in the older Śrīvidyā sources, such as VT, the ten mudrās are not given this role as yoginīs of the bhūpura. Bhāskararāya, however, clearly says that despite their omission in VT they should be worshipped here. Oral traditions maintain that any discrepancy regarding the appropriateness of the placement of the mudrās on the bhūpura results from the fact that the three lines create only two spaces. A question arises as to whether the deities are placed on the lines themselves or in the intervening spaces. Those maintaining the latter view accept only two sets of yoginīs and omit the mudrās.

The first nine mudrās are identified with the nine sub-cakras according to the dissolution method from the bhūpura towards the bindu while as ten yoginīs they are placed in precisely the same manner as the ten siddhis. The mudrās

are frequently described in terms of the powers they represent and confer on the adept, thus:

Yoginī	Meaning and Attribute
1. Sarvasaṃkṣobhinī	Power to make everything restless
2. Sarvavidrāvaṇī	Power to drive anything away
3. Sarvākarṣiṇī	Power to attract anything
4. Sarvavaśaṅkarī	Power to influence or subjugate
5. Sarvonmādini	Power to intoxicate or make passionate
6. Sarvamahāṅkuśā	Power to goad or control anything
7. Sarvakhecarī	Power to fly or bind
8. Sarvabīja	Power over all bījās
9. Sarvayoni	Power over the (nine) Yonis or cakras
10. Sarvatrikhaṇḍā	Power over all the various sets of three aspects of reality

With the twenty-eight yoginīs of the bhūpura the presiding deities of the śrīcakra's major sub-cakras are completed.[97] Each of the sub-cakras can also be considered, from the dissolution method's view, a distinctive āvaraṇa, an enclosure or obstacle systematically approached and transcended in the ritual process. Thus the yoginīs are also referred to as āvaraṇadevatas (deities of the enclosures) and each group is considered the key to achieving the next progressive stage in the ascent of the śrīcakra. Śrīcakra pūjā, therefore, is frequently called navāvaraṇapūjā or the pūjā which overcomes the nine obstacles to realization.

Speculative and symbolic interpretations of the śrīcakra are intimately related to, if not inseparable from, the ritual practices associated with them. Like all

Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts have deliberately brought philosophical and symbolic elements into the practical realm and rarely engage in specualtion for its own sake.

In Śrīvidyā, however, the speculative tendency has led thinkers to fill in the lacuna that seemed most wanting in consistency. Hence where a "fourth" or "sixteenth" subsuming element can be brought into the discussion to complete the symbolism or where a prominent and universally acknowledged Tantric feature can be incorporated into the specific patterns of symbols (such as the mātṛkās on the śrīcakra) it is given a role. One adept summarized this general propensity saying:

> Though we believe Śrīvidyā is the most ancient teaching of the Vedas and that the śrīcakra is the original yantra what is even more important to us is that Śrīvidyā lacks nothing. We need not borrow from others since [from our point of view] it is they who have borrowed things from us. Śrīvidyā incorporates all the essential things, we do not care if some call them Tantric or Vedic or whatever. This is the original vidyā [i.e., wisdom] so it is natural that whatever is found here is sometimes found elsewhere.[98]

One example of the introduction of a purely theorectical element into the symbolic scheme is the description of the śrīcakra according to the preservaton method (sthitikrama). As it has been observed, the creation

method (ś**ṛṣṭikrama**) is the approach favored by Śrīvidyā adepts for theoretical and speculative descriptions of the śrīcakra's origin and interpretation while the dissolution method (samahārakrama) is preferred for ritual purposes. The preservation method (sthitikrama), however, does not appear to have any theological or practical value other than completing an obvious theological pattern. Hence according to the sthitikrama the śrīcakra is analyzed from the outermost gates to the eight lotus petals and then from the bindu to the fourteen minor triangles. This approach combines and balances, as it were, the other two methods but fails to serve any practical purpose. This sort of theoretical accomodation, however relatively insignificant to Śrīvidyā's theological formulations, nonetheless completes the "natural" link in an otherwise incomplete chain of symbols. Such inclusive theological elements are deliberately devised to enhance Śrīvidyā's consistency and reenforce its entire theological structure.

In summary, the śrīcakra provides both the speculative and ritual basis of Śrīvidyā by incorporating common Śākta and Tantric elements into patterns of worship that imitate Vedic ritual. Though it is not chronologically the earliest nor the most common of yantras it is among a select few whose ritual dimensions have been scrupulously designed to follow its construction. Its symbolism does not merely

el.borate theoretical concepts but is central to the interpretion of liberation in a system committed to uniting worldly and spiritual goals.

1. YH, 1.9cd-10ab.

2. HTSL, p.58.

3. YH, 1.6 says, "The symbolism of the cakra, similarly the symbolism of the mantra and the pūjā, are the threefold symbols of the divine Tripurā." **cakrasaṅketako mantrapūjāsaṅketakau tathā/ trividhastripurādevyāḥ saṅketaḥ parameśvari//.** See Kaviraj, YH, third edition, p.12.

4. See the brief remarks of T.A. Gopinath Rao on the date of the śrīcakra as an image in: Rao, T.A. Gopinath, Elements of Hindu Iconongraphy. Madras: Govt. Press, 1914, reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985, in two volumes, p.22f. See also Part Two regarding the presence of the śrīcakra at Cidambaram.

5. The term maṇḍala is not often used in Hindu Tantrism, as it is among the Buddhists, to indicate a yantra or cakra.

6. It should be noted that the actual drawing of the śrīcakra or its being made into two or three dimensional physcial object is considered a rather mechanical process. This is not to suggest that its construction is not considereu an art or that the artisans are not highly skilled. One contemporary adept even maintained that its drawing should be left to those belonging to the viśvakarma caste of carpenters and artisans. But like the actual casting of bronze in the West, the casting or drawing of the śrīcakra is not on a par with its original composition. In this case, the śrīcakra is not mere art but the original configuration of the universe, that is, the deity's actual shape as it becomes manifest from its original amorphous being. The numerous descriptions of drawing the śrīcakra following either the sṛṣṭhikrama or the saṃhārakrama, that is, from inside out and vice versa, are primarily for its temporary ritual use. When an adept does not keep a permanent image in which the deity's presence is invoked (either permanently or temporarily) then it is necessary to draw the śrīcakra before its ritual worship. In some of the Samaya schools the actual, physical cakra is altogether dispensed with but this is strictly a minority position. For those drawing the śrīcakra anew each time for ritual purposes there are prescriptions for insuring its purity and other conditions for ritual appropriateness in addition to the actual prescriptions for its composition. There is, as it were, a separate ritual formula for the drawing of the cakra. But this is merely directed towards the worship that is to follow: to draw the śrīcakra is held to be a skill rather than a ritual act, strictly speaking. The cakra's

sacredness lies in its ritual interidentification with the universe and the body.

7. Cf., Lakṣmīdhara on Saundaryalaharī, 11 where he quotes Taittiriya Āraṇyaka, 1.31 as referring to the four outer gateways of the bhūpura cakra.

8. Kramrisch, Stella, The Hindu Temple. Calcutta: University Press, 1946; reprinted in two volumes, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; see Vol.I, p.11 of the reprint edition.

9. For example, maṭha of the Śaṅkara tradition in Śṛṅgeri is said to be based on the śrīcakra; note also in Part Two the discussion of how an ordinary building is ritually converted into a śrīcakra for a day for the sake of performing a large śrīcakra pūjā in which a large number of women are worshipped as the goddess.

10. See Śivānanda in his Ṛjuvimarśinī on NSA, 1.43.

11. KKV, v.21.

12. Artharatnāvali on NSA, 1.43.

13. Citation from the Śrīcakraraṇadīpikā, Śrīvidyāsāparyapaddhati published by the Śrī Chidānanda Mandali, Madras, 1984. Frontispiece. The text reads: **bindutrikoṇavasukoṇadaśarayugma manvaśranagadalasaṃyutaṣoḍaśaram/ vṛttatrayam ca dhāraṇisadānatrayaṃ ca śrīcakraṃ etaduditaṃ parādevatāyaḥ//**

14. Occasionally the term baindava cakra refers to the bindu, central trikoṇa and the eight triangles of the vasukoṇa. Cf., Bhāskararāya's usage in his bhāṣya on Tripurā Upaniṣad, Verse Three.

15. See Shankaranarayanan, S., Śrīcakra. Madras: Dipti Publications, 1970, third edition, 1981, p.44 for this quotation of the text. Printed editions do not seem to include the verse.

16. Cf., Śrīcakra, p.44 as cited above.

17. YH, 1.7.

18. See Śrīcakra, p.45, ftn.2, no citation is given as to the original source. The text reads: **tvagśṛṅmaṃsamedo'sthidhatavaḥ śaktimūlakaḥ/ majjaśuklaprāṇajīvadhavaḥ śivamūlakaḥ//**

19. Subhagodayavāsanā, v.9.

20. Setubandha, on YH, 1.10.

21. Śāktas accept pariṇāmavāda, according to Bhāskararāya, the doctrine that creation is a process of genuine transformation. They do not hold that the universe only appears to change but remains uncreated (ajātivāda) or that the transformation is mere illusion based on false perception (vivartavāda). In this way they differ significantly in their non-dualistic (advaita) philosophy from Śaṅkara and the Śāṅkara schools which maintain various forms of ajāti- and vivartavādas.
The image of the spider and its web is commonly used in Śākta theology as an example drawn from the Upaniṣadic explanation. Cf., Chāndogya Upaniṣad,

22. Cf., SL, v.1.

23. KKV, v.22.

24. "Agastya" of "Ānanda" Mandali, January, 1985.

25. KKV, vs.37-38.

26. YHdīpikā, 1.10 and 1.14.

27. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.2.

28. Cf., Setubandha on YH, 1.10 where Bhāskararāya remarks that the bindu is Brahman which manifests as the central trikoṇa. This, he says, is not merely his own opinion but is upheld by earlier commentators.

29. Bhāskararāya says in the Setubandha, on YH 1.14: **akāra parmaśivaḥ tasya śrī ī puṇyogalakṣaṇe nip tāyoḥ saṃyogene ekāraniṣpattiḥ//**

30. Bhāskararāya glosses the term vaikharī as, vi meaning much and khara, hard, that is, speech in its physical form. Cf., Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.371. Sastry, p.190.

31. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.56. Sastry, p.60. Bhāskararāya passes over the mention of only twenty-five tattvas or categories of reality (the number in the Yoga system), as mentioned in the quotation here from Rudrayāmala (?). Śāktism accepts thirty-six tattvas, a point that is without controversy along sectarian lines. In the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.1, Bhāskararāya clearly states, "...the

mātṛkā letters...number only forty-eight."

32. Cf., YH, 1. 79-85 which lists all the names for the nine sub-cakras.

33. YH, 1. 79-85ff.

34. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.73. Sastry, p.76.

35. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.256. Sastry, p.138.

36. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.391 which reads **nityāṣoḍaśīkarūpa**, that is, in "the form of the sixteen nityās". Cf., Sastry, p.195. The sixteen nityās are the main subject of speculation and worship in the Tantrarāja Tantra and continue to play a prominent role in Śrīvidyā worship. Their names, here taken as deities of the śrīcakra, are well-known to all Śāktas: Kāmeśvari, Bhagamālinī, Nityāklinnā, Bheruṇḍā, Vahnivāsinī, Mahāvajreśvarī, Śivaduti, Tvaritā, Kulasundarī, Nityā, Nilapātakinī, Vijayā, Sarvamaṅgalā, Jvālamālinī, Citrā and (Mahā) Tripurasundarī.

37. There is some dispute among Śrīvidyā adepts as the to actual number of consonants in the Sanskrit alphabet. Bhāskararāya outlines the problem in the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya where he takes the less popular view that the consonants number only forty-eight rather than fifty-two. See his remarks on Verse 1.

38. Saubhāgyabhāskara on LSN, n.577 which reads **mātṛkāvarnarūpinī**, that is, "of the form of the mātṛkā letters." Cf., Sastry, pp.239-240. Bhāskararāya seems untroubled by his own inconsistency as to precisely how many mātṛkās make up the Sanskrit alphabet. Here in his early work he appears to accept fifty-one while in the later Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya he argues for forty-eight by excluding kṣa and jña as compounds and the Vedic retroflex ḷ as identical to l.

39. As noted by Bhāskararāya in the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, Verse Two where he says, "...the nine Yonis whose nature are the latent mental impressions (saṃskāratātmanā); some of these [latent impressions] already exist, others are still potential. These are calledj [in Verse Two] the nine cakras (navacakrāṇi) or the agents [of creation]..."

40. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.2.

41. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, Verse One.

42. Note here that Dirk Jan Hoens remark that the third sub-cakra is the sarvarakṣākāra is incorrect. He has interchanged the name of this sub-cakra with the following sub-cakra of ten triangles. See HT, pp.114-115.

43. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984.

44. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.2.

45. YH, 1.79-85.

46. Tripuropaniṣadbhāṣya, v.3. The quotation resembles Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.16 but is not identical.

47. This series of identificaitons of yoginīs and Sanskrit sounds does not correspond to the identification made in the Śrīvidyā ritual manuals at the point of this sub-cakra in the śrīcakra puja. In the ritual handbooks the outer set of ten triangles begins at the retroflex ṇa and finishes at the aspirated bha; the inner set begins at the next consonant in the usual order, that is, ma and finishes at kṣa which follows the ordinarily last letter of Sanskrit, ha.

48. YHdīpikā on 1.73-78.

49. See HT, p.115.

50. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.3.

51. The senses of action, the karmendriyas, are the physical organs; the senses of knowledge, jñānendriyas, are the corresponding faculties. The four aspects of the mind are subsumed under the general term, antaḥkārana, and refer to it plus the distinctive qualities of the mānas or mind, the buddhi or capacity of judgement and the citta or intellectual ability.

52. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

53. A member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, January, 1985.

54. Cf., NSA, Chapter Two which describes the supernatural powers associated with the worship of the śrīcakra.

55. The translation of the yoginī's names follows the oral interpretation of their meanings by contemporary south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. It is, as it were, a composite of these interpretations which concentrated on the acquisition

of such abilities.

56. "Nārada" of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

57. In addition to the pūjāpaddhatis this is affirmed in the KKV, v.33. Textual references to the nityādevatas abound in Śākta Tantric literature, cf., Śaktisamgama Tantra, 3.12.36ff.; NSA, 1.25ff.; and, of course, the most extensive treatment in Tantrarāja Tantra, Chapter 3ff.

58. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

59. Saubhāgyasudnodaya, 3.8.

60. Subhāgodayavasana, v.11.

61. Saubhāgyasudhodaya, 3.9.

62. One such published paddhati, now long out of print, attests to this oral tradition. Cf., Śrīvidyāratnākaraḥ of Swamishriharitharanandasaraswati (Shrikarapatraswami) Maharaj, edited by Shrisitaramkaviraj, Bhaktisudha Sahitya Parishad: Calcutta, 1951.

63. "Purohita" of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

64. Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.4.

65. Bhāskararāya argues this point not only in the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya but in the Setubandha on YH, 1.52-56.

66. For a more complete discussion of these points see the Introduction to Part Three of this study.

67. Rāmeśvara on PKS, 3.9. Rāmeśvara's strong criticisms of Umānandanātha are also discussed in the historical remarks in Part One, in Part Two in the discussion of the living traditions that claim Bhāskararāya's spiritual legacy and in the introductory remarks to Part Three.

68. "Jyotiṣa" of "Samaya" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

69. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

70. YH, 1.24.

71. Rāmeśavara on PKS, 3.9.

72. See Rāmeś vara on PKS, 3.9f.

73. On SL, v.11ff.

74. Saubhāgyasudhodaya, 3.10.

75. Artharatnāvalī on the Nityaṣoḍaśīkārṇava, 1.32ff.

76. Ritual worship proceeds, as we have noted, according to the saṃhārakrama from the outermost sub-cakras towards the center thus the lowest level of spiritual achievement corresponds to the outermost portions of the śrīcakra.

77. The āmnayas names are technical though their literal sense as directions can be taken to reflect their placement on the central trikoṇa. The fourth level, Amṛtānanda says in Saubhāgyasudhodaya, 3.13, encompasses the whole śrīcakra and its branches, which he calls here the "great cakra" (mahācakra).

78. See NSA, 1.46-58 with the respective commentaries of Vidyānanda and Jayaratha and Lakṣmīdhara on SL, v.11ff.

79. The general description of the śrīcakra as composed of forty-three trianges is maintained in the Tripurā Upaniṣad, Verse Four, cf., Rāmānanda's remarks are Verse Three. Note also that at the Cidambaram Naṭarāja temple in south India the śrīcakra cut in relief on a wall nearby the sub-shrine of the goddess Śivakāmasundarī appears only as the sets of interlacing triangles, omitting the other portions. This relief is recent but is apparently based on an old painting.

80. Śrīvidyāratnasūtra, v.4f.

81. For the placement of the prakaṭa yoginīs see the diagram in Appendix Two.

82. The placement of the yoginīs is taken up in NSA, I.153f.

83. Cf., the list given under anima in Apte, S.V., The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957; reprinted, Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1978, p.37.

84. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, October, 1984.

85. Discussion of the siddhis and their placement on the śrīcakra is seen at NSA, I.153cd. Jayaratha fails to mention the siddhis and, in fact, only finds a place for the eight mātṛkās.

86. Cf., NSA, 2.8ff, and 2.32.

87. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984. Several other adepts from other Mandalis made nearly identical comments.

88. This story is repeated time and again among living adepts. Its textual source I only later discovered was the Introduction to the VVR by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri.

89. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

90. Cf., HT, p.65.

91. HT, p.65. The eight Bhairavas are: Asitaṅga, Ruru, Caṇḍa, Krodha, Unmatta, Kapālin, Bhiṣaṇa and Saṁhārin. The bījākṣaras of the two sets correspond indicating their close relationship at the subtle mantric level. These bījas are the long vowels, the dipthongs and the visarga.

92. HT, p.65f; also HTSL, p.42.

93. For the placement of the mātṛkās and the other bhūpura yoginīs see the diagram in Appendix Two.

94. On the interpretation and meaning of mudrās see Gonda, Jan, Mudrā, in Ex orbe religionum, Studia G. Widengren, II, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972. Also HT, p.115f.

95. The tradition of showing the mudrās at the conclusion of the pūjā is maintained in a few ritual texts belonging to disinct parmaparas though among those that use sources prescribing the showing of the mudrās after each set of yoginīs some allowances are made. In one case, for example, showing the mudrās is held back despite the textual prescription mandating their being shown after each sub-cakra. In this case the adept explained, "The mudrās belong to each of the [sub-] cakras but can shown at the end of the pūjā. This is alteration can be prescribed at the discretion of the guru. The point is not to lose concentration in the course of the ritual. When the pūjā is completely internalized we make no movements or utter mantras or sounds aloud. Everything is turned over to the internal meditation thus only after emerging from meditation do we complete the ritual necessities such as showing the mudrās." ("Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, December, 1984.)

96. HT, p.116.

97. There are, in fact, other deities placed on the *śrīcakra* during its ritual *worship such* as on the so-called *gurumaṇḍala* and in the *āyudhāpūjā* or worship of the goddess's weapons.

98. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

Part Two, Conclusion and Appendices

of the thesis entitled

The Śrīvidyā School of Śākta Tantrism: A Study of the Texts and Contexts of the Living Traditions in South India

by

Douglas Renfrew Brooks

to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

The Study of Religion

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

March, 1987

Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition in South India
Introduction

A. Methodology for the Study of Living Tradition

At the outset of the dissertation I mentioned briefly the basic methodology employed in the study of the living Śrīvidyā tradition, namely, observation, interview and participation. The most unusual aspect of this study is its reliance upon essentially "private" information, that is, materials that have been gathered because of the author's access to the initiated tradition. Since Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage has insured secrecy for generations the present enquiry naturally raises serious methodological and ethical issues.

It seems one thing to write from "within" a given religious tradition---this is done by scholars who are as committed to their individual faith as they are devoted to honest enquiry---yet it is quite another thing to discuss an esoteric tradition's secrets and to assume that other scholars may not have access to similar materials. Because of these unusual circumstances some further elaboration regarding the acquisition of materials seems appropriate.

Śrīvidyā tradition itself offers precedence of critical self analysis. Oral tradition has historically distinguished adepts more and less devoted to the exposition

of its intellectual and theoretical components. Intellectuals are frequently scholars in traditional sciences, composing textual sources within and beyond Śrīvidyā's parameters, and yet they are no less esteemed for their ritual expertise and personal spirituality. Bhāskararāya is, perhaps, the key figure culminating this tradition of self analysis and despite Śrīvidyā's historical self preoccupations it is evident that many of its authors were sensitive to the criticisms of non-initiates.

There are those within Śrīvidyā, however, who hold any scholarly enterprise with suspicion, even when it is performed in the pious service of the tradition. Like all Tantrics, Śrīvidyā adepts emphasis the need for active participation in all phases of religious discipline; intellectual endeavors for their own sake are, at best, tangential to the spirit of Tantrism and, at worst, a violation of one of its foremost tenets. Bhāskararāya, along with other historical commentators, frequently chides those seeking a purely "academic" knowledge of tradition by claiming it to be a fruitless pursuit.[1]

But the study of theoretical and ritual intricacies for the sake of incorporating them into active religious practice has always been a major aspect of Śrīvidyā tradition. As we have seen in Part One, Śrīvidyā elaborates its intellectual and theoretical components to extraordinary

lengths---none of which, we can be sure, is done simply for the sake of intellectual rigor. Traditionalists exhibiting a natural aversion to Śrīvidyā's intellectual components are, for the most part, no less diligent in their practical and ritual interpretations. As a result, the majority of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts accept the deeply rooted predisposition for intellectual speculation as part of the spiritual discipline; intellectual enquiry and scholarship are, historically speaking, well within the tradition's self understanding of religious life.

Srīvidyā for its initiated adherents, as for most persons committed to their religious faith, is not an endeavor separated from other aspects of life. It is a total commitment to a way of life that includes for many proponents a broad intellectual curiosity that entails a critical study of human nature and natural science. Some adepts are more parochial in their interests but no less honest in faith, and of course Śrīvidyā has its share of the narrow-minded, the hypocritical and the pompous.

The materials on living traditions included here were collected primarily during 1984-85 though my affiliations with Śrīvidyā adepts began in 1977. The present study should be considered the result of this extended period of research. Prior to 1984, however, I had had only limited contact with Śrīvidyā adepts who were not close personal

acquaintances. The decision to undertake the study was based primarily upon two major considerations: feasibility and, what might be termed, ethical responsibility.

The crucial factor was not only the permission but the active involvement of my own teacher, Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy of Madurai. Dr. Sundaramoorthy's training as an academic schooled in Western methods of religious and philological studies as well as his own involvement in Srividya provided me with an unusual opportunity. His perspective is that of detached scholar and involved practitioner; the breadth of his knowledge was essential for determining the quality of gathered information.

The vast majority of interviews were conducted with both Dr. Sundaramoorthy and myself present and, indeed, it was frequently only his presence that permitted me initial access into an adept's home or into a temple complex. In most cases adepts did not question our initial enquiries until after we had been allowed to enter the premises and enjoy their hospitality: getting "in the door", so to speak, was not the difficult part.

In only a few weeks of research it was determined that a study of living adepts was feasible insofar as acquiring information from a sufficiently broad cross section of initiates was concerned. Actually getting adepts to discuss their own traditional interpretations and experiences proved

to be another matter. Though Srīvidyā is carried on by persons living essentially private religious lives, the number of informants increased exponentially through our initial contacts. What was first considered one of the most challenging aspects for determining the study's feasibility---meeting a diverse cross section of initiates willing to discuss their traditional practices---was ultimately one of the least critical issues.

Of more consequence to me as a scholar and participant was the responsibility felt towards Śrīvidyā's traditional secrecy and its implied restrictions on public discussion. What gave me the right to come forward publicly with materials considered private from the time of their inception? The mere academic enterprise was hardly enough justification given Tantrism's admonitions.

The decision to proceed, I believe, was neither irresolute nor irresponsible but rather based on a feeling shared by a significant number of adepts. Such a study, it was decided, would do a service to Śrīvidyā tradition only when undertaken without apologetic motives. Adepts agreed that scholarship and tradition are best served by an enquiry into Srīvidyā's historical and theological developments that is conducted in a public forum. Formulating a public image has never before been such a pressing concern to Tantrics and most have preferred to maintain a rigorous privacy and

secrecy. But contemporary circumstances and Śrīvidyā's wide spread acceptance in south India by high caste elements have brought about a demand for a more open investigation into its practice, an investigation prompted by adepts themselves.

Like other Tantric sects, Śrīvidyā has become increasingly "available" through printed sources and through a formulation of its own self identity vis a vis other sects. Adepts have never been immune to "outside" opinions despite their protestations and emphasis on privacy and initiation. Lakṣmīdhara's defense of the Samayācāra and the Śaṅkara tradition's "sanitization" of Śākta elements point to a concern for bringing esoteric elements within the boundaries of conservative social acceptability. The Śrīvidyā adepts recorded here are at least in part responding to these and similar issues. But unlike earlier historical figures, these contemporary adepts are subject to even more drastic changes in the tradition's transmission, evidenced in the transition from oral and privately maintained scriptures to publicly available printed texts.

Śrīvidyā offers a fascinating example of the pressures of technological advancement on secret (or at least, initiated) scriptures and traditions as they enter the public domain of print. This transition into the public domain has indeed affected even the notion of scripture

itself since the printing of Śrīvidyā sources invariably involves individuals not directly involved in it or at least those not within the same branch of the tradition. Without effective control over the printed "product", many adepts are reluctant to accept the contents of a given publication as authentic or free from serious error, including unwarranted interpolation.[2] In other cases the printing of mantras or other sensitive materials is criticized not because of errors in content but for being printed at all, or because an edition fails to provide the necessary explanations, including warnings or disclaimers concerning the ritual use of a such materials by non-initiates.

The majority of adepts are aware of some of these historical changes, especially involving the transition to the printed word and their increasing dependence upon it, but they are not always involved in critically assessing the consequences. None fail to observe the effects the availability of printed texts (or the lack thereof) have on their oral transmissions and the deepening role the printed word plays in their overall understanding. Only a few essential texts are preserved mnemonically and almost all serve some ritual purpose, such as paddhatis, stotras or stavas. Texts preserved as handwritten manuscripts are less frequently in the hands of private initiates intending to pass them on to future generations than they are in public

or formal private manuscript libraries. Thus contemporary adepts are increasingly dependent upon printed documents that they neither inherently trust nor are necessarily able to acquire for either financial or logistical reasons.

In several cases it was my own ability to make available works in print editions that contributed visibly to adepts' interpretations. I acknowledge that I have had, in this respect, a significant effect on their views of the textual tradition and at least a tangential effect on the future of those lineages for whom I provided texts. Books even when available in print are not always financially within the reach of traditional practitioners though it should be emphasized that such gifts were never used as inducements for information.

Adepts were informed in advance not only that their views might be made public but that they would be open to criticism. I do not believe this seriously affected the sincerity or frankness of discussions and the few cases where it seemed to have made a difference have been removed from consideration. This delicate issue was more frequently raised first by the interviewee. What was I going to do with this information if it was revealed to me? Remarkably enough not one individual refused to discuss the tradition openly, provided they were not held accountable personally.[3]

The decision to discuss openly and for the public

record any elements of the tradition considered secret (itself a largely subjective judgement at the discretion of each lineage's interpretation) was made by each individual consenting to the limited conditions outlined above. What some adepts considered too sensitive a topic for direct comment, such as the actual worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna, others remarked upon freely. Many adepts, however, acted without restraint in their frankness nor were they sparing of other living and historical figures.

I did not deem it my duty to arbitrate disputes or clarify interpretations based on my own textual or historical studies since I was most interested in ascertaining the adepts' own views. Interpretive issues were raised to elicit a response. On points of personal disagreement, however, I simply refrained from mentioning my opinion or responded diplomatically. The overall aim was to gather and interpret information as it was presented rather than create or directly contribute to an adept's opinion. In the majority of cases adepts simply told us what we had hoped they would, the key element to success being patience and gentle persistence.

Though some interviewed adepts will undoubtedly disapprove of my analysis and criticism, they will not be able to object on the grounds of undocumented or partial accounts. Materials were either recorded on tape or in

notes later translated.[4] The decision on the part of Dr. Sundaramoorthy and myself to make public certain interpretive aspects of the tradition was no different than the choice made by the initiates we interviewed: whatever was said is recounted in as unprejudiced a manner as possible. We relied upon our own expertise to determine the quality and authenticity of the remarks. I have not included myself directly in any interpretive accounts and Dr. Sundaramoorthy only in those instances deemed particularly illuminative to the study.

Beginning with only three known informants, the task of expanding the network involved collecting locally published materials of various organized Śrīvidyā lineages. These were selected on an ad hoc basis and initially by their availability in commercial book shops and through private collectors. Every lead was followed and none excluded without investigation or because a group or individual did not fit some preconceived pattern. Any person or text claiming to belong to Śrīvidyā was at least reviewed. Texts were traced back to publishing sources and from these contacts usually further names and addresses were obtained verbally. From a single adept it was often possible to contact at least two others inside and outside his or her lineage. Several traditional lineages have formally established themselves in a quasi-public manner, producing

written and published materials for ritual use and study; some intend these published materials purely for their own private use while others distribute them openly. Frequently organized groups or even individuals are involved as well in conducting private and semi-public gatherings.

The final results of these investigations were actually quite astonishing (especially in the frankness of the adepts' remarks) to say nothing of being voluminous. The actual number of informants included here is only a sample of the materials gathered. Quotations are sometimes drawn from several conversations or from different portions of the same conversation. Close attention is paid to the contexts in which remarks have been made and their presentation is not intended either to confirm or reject their content.

There can be little doubt that the success of an interview depended on establishing mutual confidence and respect in its incipient stages. An adept's opinions were not simply accepted as veridical on textual or interpretive matters but were taken at face value in respect to accounts of personal experience. It is a presupposition of this study that adepts' comments included here were made with sincere intentions; others deemed lacking personal integrity have been omitted.

There can be little question that the both the methodology and the results of this study depend upon my own

subjective evaluations. The integrity of these findings depends in no small measure on an ability to appraise individual character, but in all matters subject to historical and textual verification an objective conclusion has been reached whenever possible. I fully accept the blame but cannot claim full credit for gathering and evaluating these findings: Dr. Sundaramoorthy has been a constant source of advice and one that, over an extended period of time, has proven as critically incisive as one is likely to find. In the majority of cases after we identified ourselves as Śrīvidyā initiates in order to establish a mutual interest and sense of responsibility for the tradition, the aim was simply to direct the interviewees' conversation rather than offer our own input. In this respect, I should add, Dr. Sundaramoorthy was masterful---he deftly concealed his own expertise whenever it seemed appropriate to the task. To put it in his own words:

> The job is to find out what _other_ Śrīvidyā adepts think and do, and to judge _the_ degree to which what _they_ say _is_ what they do (and vice versa). In _some_ respects, say in the content of specific texts or doctrines, it is easy to evaluate an adept's knowledge; their sincerity, I believe, is reflected in the ways in which they express themselves rather than in their knowledge of what is historical or factually verifiable. But their own historical and practical interpretations provide the key to understanding what Śrīvidyā means to them as religious people. Even when they are far off the mark factually their views enliven an understanding of what

makes up the tradition. The heart of the tradition, after all, is people who follow it.[5]

B. Sampling the Living Tradition: Caste and Other Considerations within Śrīvidyā Lineages

The materials selected for inclusion in the present study seek out a cross section of living Śrīvidyā in south India. There is both consistency and significant variation in the opinions expressed. Śrīvidyā clearly emerges in the historical and theoretical continuity of its views (as they were discussed in Part One) and yet, like all forms of religious faith, ultimately finds its locus in the individuality of its adherents.

In the final assessment members of over thirty distinct lineages (parampara) were identified and dozens of others lacking the standard measure of three generations of teachers. It is difficult to say precisely how many individuals were interviewed since on certain occasions at large gatherings dozens of conversations were documented. Of these thirty paramparās, six have been chosen for profiles, others mentioned only selectively.

The decision to limit discussion to a sampling of the materials is based on two determining criteria. First, these groups and individuals were the ones with which I had frequent contact, and naturally, I was able to determine

more accurately their theological positions and observe more closely their ritual practices. Second, they often but not always reflected opinions shared by the majority not included. While a degree of consistency on theoretical matters cannot account for the individuality demonstrated in practice, there was, in my opinion, certainly enough consistency to attempt a portrait of the normative "tradition" as actually having a representative opinion. The groups repeatedly cited here offer some of the most fascinating variations in theory and practice or have an especially important role in the historical diffusion of Srividya tradition. For example, one group traces their lineage directly to Bhāskararāya and yet interpret his directions for ritual practice in ways inconsistent with his specifications. Another claims itself to descend through the Śaṅkara tradition while yet another links itself with the temple traditions of Cidambaram's Naṭarāja.

Profiles of these six lineages are given special attention but others are cited (and documented in the notes) when their opinions are deemed noteworthy. Following the profiles of lineages, profiles of three individuals are also given. These adepts are, in one way or another, remarkable in their interpretations or practices.

The men and women interviewed ranged in age from twelve to eighty; the sampled proportions are roughly the same

between genders since the tradition at least theoretically accepts both as equal for initiation; evidence suggests that the living tradition fulfills this Tantric prescription. A clear majority of Śrīvidyā adepts in contemporary south India are Brahmin by caste, perhaps as many as eighty percent of the initiates. Of these all but a select few are not smārta Śaivites by family tradition.

The reasons for Śrīvidyā's domination by Brahmin caste initiates are complex and have both religious and social dimensions. In Tamil Nāḍu one historical reason for Brahmin domination of Śrīvidyā is the near exclusion of non-Brahmins from the study of Sanskrit. In the past seventy-five years, non-Brahmin participation in Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit centered literary tradition has been certainly influenced by powerful anti-Brahmin sentiments and by the "caste feelings" of Brahmin initiates.

Śrīvidyā's oral tradition is transmitted almost exclusively in regional, vernacular languages, is tied to Sanskrit as its theoretical and ritual medium. At one point research was deliberately directed towards obtaining a larger sample of non-Brahmin initiates. This reflected not only the kinds of contacts we had made from within Brahmin dominated lineages but what appeared to be a reflection of the present situation. An effort was made to investigate inter-caste relations within the sect. Results indicate

that "caste feelings", that is, strong identification with caste and its defined social dimensions still prevail among so-called egalitarian Tantrics. Upper caste initiates invariably "qualified" their relations with low caste initiates while low caste adherents expressed ambivalence towards initiates and non-initiates from socially privileged castes maintaining feelings of superiority.

None of the non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā initiates in Tamil Nādu harboring ill feelings towards Brahmins for their historical roles, view Sanskrit _per se_ as a socially repressive tool of domination. This is unusual and especially noteworthy because of the tendency in contemporary Tamil Nāḍu to identify one with the other: Sanskrit is, in the eyes of non-Brahmins, the Brahmin's language and to a large extent represents their monopoly of privilege. On the other hand, however, oral traditions within Śrīvidyā have given Tamil, the vernacular language, an important role in the teaching and explication of Sanskrit sources. Without the expressive qualities of the spoken language, the mysteries of Tantric Sanskrit render Śrīvidyā's teachings obscure, if not entirely irrelevant.

Only a few self-designated Samayācārins maintained that Śrīvidyā was restricted high caste (i.e., _traivarṇika_) persons and only a handful would admit that caste feelings affected their choice of initiates or their welcoming of low

caste persons into ritual contexts. Some maintained a dual standard, one Tantric and one they termed Vaidika. In one interesting case I was invited to witness a śrīcakra pūjā of a particular lineage and was given an honored seat to observe the ritual. Nothing was kept secret either during the ritual or in the conversations that followed. When it was time to share the food offerings, however, the host made the situation quite clear:

> I am a Tantric regarding spiritual matters and treat any initiate equally. We are ritual equals and may discuss our shared tradition openly. But I am a Vaidika in all other social situations. I am not permitted according to caste restrictions to eat with anyone other than my caste equals.[6]

This elderly, senior initiate distinguished what he considered spiritual events based on principles of equality from activities encompassing daily life based on hierarchy. Once the ritual and discussion (still part of the "ritual" liminality, as it were) was completed, the rules of ordinary social intercourse obtained even with regard to substances offered in those ritual contexts.

Other Brahmin initiates expressed less rigid lines demarcating themselves from low caste participants and with regard to their general social contacts with such persons. In one instance an organized group sponsored a large semi-private (that is, by invitation only) ritual worship made possible by private donations. The chief administrator of

this project explained the reason for only Brahmin caste participants this way:

> We do not restrict entry into the group by caste nor will I personally discriminate against anyone by caste, whether it be in sharing food or in other ritual matters. But I am bound by certain social restrictions in order to make this ritual successful. If I were to accept donations from non-Brahmins and allow them to participate then I would offend many of those Brahmins on whom I depend for support. My concern is to make this event successful, it is unfortunate that this includes not inviting qualified non-Brahmin initiates.[7]

It was clear that I, as a non-Brahmin participant, did not fall into this category of exclusion and that the reason was simple: not all Westerners were considered in the same way as Indians, my introduction to participants as a Śrīvidyā initiate exempted me from these caste restrictions.[8] Since no other non-Indian attended the function it is difficult to assess how they might have been treated. Presumably only an initiate or close guest of an initiate would have been invited or permitted to observe. In this case there was no visible objection raised to my sharing in the ritual <u>prasāda</u> but it is impossible to tell if individual participants privately expressed disapproval. A gauge of the tacit acceptance of my presence was that the organizers expected, and indeed compelled me, to partake in the distribution of food offerings and no participant refrained from accepting food <u>after</u> I did.

As in the earlier example, this group's organizers felt conventional social constraints far more influential and determining than Tantric caste and gender egalitarianism. The group hosting the ritual performance considered themselves Kaulas, accepting the ritual legitimacy of such things as the pañcamakāras, and the inclusion of any qualified person to the ranks of initiates regardless of caste--at least theoretically. It was increasingly evident, however, that despite expressions of theoretical equality between castes, social conventions influencing high caste initiates effectively limit access to this lineage's secrets and participation in organized events. There are, however, exceptions to this general tendency (cited below) in which Tantrism's egalitarian claims are reflected in the practical interpretations of Brahmin-dominated groups.

In summary, there are three general categories of high caste, Brahmin-dominated initiates:

(1) The first severely restricts access to Śrīvidyā tradition and usually limits initiation to traivarṇika caste males. In practice I never discovered any of these initiates to be other than Brahmins. They base their claim on being Samayācārins following Lakṣmīdhara though it appears that they have either not carefully investigated Lakṣmīdhara's works or have interpreted him to suit their own needs. Śrīvidyā, they assert, is only practiced

correctly and in its "original" form when it follows these caste and practical restrictions. This group also demonstrates an aversion to the term Tantra or Tantric and views Śrīvidyā as a "non-Tantric" tradition.

(2) The second type of high caste initiate usually claims a Kaula heritage and frequently accepts in theory the controversial elements of Tantric theory and ritual. In practice, however, these controversial elements are usually only in evidence symbolically or through accepted forms of substitution (pratinidhi). Tantric egalitarianism gives way to the rigors of social convention concerning caste, marriage and gender roles: while theoretically accepting a "Tantric view" in which these are not the substantive criteria for evaluating spiritual qualification (adhikāra), these lineages nonetheless conform to the norms of "ordinary" smārta Brahmin society.

(3) The third type of high caste initiate is more complex since he accepts Tantric views on spiritual equality between castes and sexes but may not accept certain social implications. For example, in practice, one finds non-traivarṇikas initiated into Śrīvidyā by Brahmin adepts and no dual standard of Tantrika and Vaidika as cited above. Yet certain social conventions are rigorously upheld, especially in instances in which the Tantras are silent or vague. For example, among Brahmins of this type the

restrictions placed on women during menstruation are still actively enforced. Women are secluded or restricted from touching or partaking in ordinary "unpolluted" activities or ritual events. In effect, this creates an interpretive dilemma for the Brahmin initiate: should women be excluded from initiation during their years of fertility because their menstrual cycle interrupts the daily ritual obligations which must be performed in a state of ritual purity? There is clearly a split on this an other similar issues involving ritual purity and pollution. Some high caste teachers freely initiate women, giving them either a "special" set of restrictions to govern these recurring circumstances; others simply do not articulate the issue and permit women to exercise their own judgement. Still others maintain that since women usually do not receive initiation without the permission of their husbands (this being an unstated "rule" of oral tradition) and are frequently initiates along with their husbands, their husbands perform their ritual obligations during either the period of pollution or for all the menstruating years. In some cases teachers do not initiate women until after they have passed their fertile years. Restrictions on ritual and obligatory forms of sādhana performed while in a ritual state of inauspiciousness are less severe. For example, initiates within a year of the death of an immediate relative, such as

a parent, do not curb their Śrīvidyā ritual practices but do observe a year's penance in other respects such as refraining from auspicious events such as temple rituals, marriages or other rites (samskāra).

In effect, this third category of adept maintains a dual Tantrika/Vaidika set of standards not based strictly on caste (though not lacking caste considerations) and definitely effecting distinctions based on gender. Brahmin women initiated into Śrīvidyā are subject to a different set of restrictions than men even though they may be ritual or spiritual equals in other situations. It is not uncommon, for example, for women to be Śrīvidyā gurus and leaders of a lineage. In one documented case, the wife of a deceased teacher became a lineage's guru and ultimate authority. Her traditional initiated name (dīkṣānāma) did not, however, reflect a gender distinction. According to one adept gender distinctions do not substantially effect the spiritual achievement of women but merely maintain the "correct" ritual and social conditions for the tradition to flourish.

> We consider women our spiritual equals and they may perform all the rituals and disciplines that men do. But because they are different, they must accept certain qualifications and even restrictions. We believe, for example, in observing menstrual pollution which, according to our custom, is only proper. But that women menstruate does not mean they cannot be Śrīvidya upāsakas or even great teachers of the tradition. It only means that they must observe certain rules that apply to them but this does not lower their stature either spiritually or, for that

matter, socially.[9]

However this adept may explain the situation there is undoubtedly a form of gender distinction observed regarding qualification and practice of the tradition. It is clear that egalitarianism in the Tantras is not interpreted to mean men and women are subject to the <u>same</u> set of qualifications and conditions. I found no open dissent among high caste women initiates to the customary practices concerning ritual pollution based on gender nor did any suggest that their Śrīvidyā initiation exempted them from these observances. There was expressed on occasion a general dislike for these observances but no women (at least in my experience) disregarded or actively sought to change the "rules" or felt empowered to do so.[10] Given the dominant position of men in Brahmin society in south India, a woman could not break these traditions without risking ostracism from her family and community.

Predictably, among non-Brahmin initiates there is a good deal more egalitarianism in practice towards women and persons of different castes. But since Śrīvidyā in south India, and in Tamil Nāḍu especially, is dominated by Brahmins it is also surprising to see little anti-Brahmanical sentiment prevalent among the non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts. Many low caste adepts view Śrīvidyā's place within Tantric tradition as an equalizing factor, a

religious force that levels out caste distinctions in both spiritual and social domains. Some low caste initiates felt their Śrīvidyā initiation effectively changed their social status and they expected equal treatment in all respects from Brahmin initiates. Those who found that the ideal of caste equality is, in practice, sometimes qualified by a dual Tantrika/Vaidika set of standards retorted that such interpretations violate the spirit of Śrīvidyā tradition. Several others responded by saying that those claiming a Vaidika heritage were bound to an <u>additional</u> set of religious injunctions which in no way affect their Tantric vows; they maintain that when Vedic rules discriminate against fellow Tantrics they should no longer apply. In other situations where individuals are not "religious" equals, ordinary conventions may be considered applicable; for others, however, any caste or gender distinctions either social or religious are considered reprehensible. A select few Brahmin initiates also maintained that there could be no separate set of qualifications for Śrīvidyā based on gender or caste and that Śrīvidyā <u>sādhanā</u> demanded a total disregard for any caste restrictions. In one such instance, a Brahmin initiate purposely arranged the marriage of his initiate son to his guru's daughter born to a non-Brahmin woman.

C. Classifying Living Śrīvidyā Tradition: Guru as the Locus of Authority and Leadership within Lineages

The most accurate criterion for identifying a Śrīvidyā adept is self designation and for the adept implies the first level of distinction within Śrīvidyā, namely, between initiates and non-initiates. The present study also makes this distinction an initial point of departure: it begins by separating initiates from those non-initiates who have become in some way associated with Śrīvidyā practices. The relationships within Śrīvidyā lineages and between initiates of other lineages is the first topic of investigation. Before proceeding directly to this discussion, however, something should be said first concerning the definition of a spiritual lineage and the meaning of religious authority in general in the Tantric tradition.

An authentic Śrīvidyā lineage (parampara) of adepts is defined according to the Tantric tradition's own specifications, that is, by the claim to at least three generations of qualified teachers. All initiates into the Śrīvidyā mantra are classified "adepts" since at this level there is usually (but not always) an extensive preliminary form of instruction. The actual manner of initiation and instruction is discussed later in the profiles of lineages and individuals.

Further distinctions between initiated adepts within

lineages are less obvious but no less important. Not all initiates become gurus and, in fact, only a few take on the responsibility of passing along the tradition, especially if their own teacher remains living. Occasionally an adept gives a partial or prefatory form of instruction and leaves the rest for some other, more senior person within the lineage or for the lineage's recognized guru.

Thus within each lineage is a kind of implied hierarchy based partially on seniority and partially on the recognition of spiritual accomplishment given by the guru or others. Not every individual is categorized or given a specific place within a lineage's hierarchy but each recognizes the authority of those who, for some reason or another, have acquired this status or power.

The key to understanding the notion of spiritual power lies in the theological role given to Śakti within the Śākta Tantric world-view. The material universe in its totality is a mere extension of the form (rūpa) of Śakti. Śakti is fully immanent within space and time and yet wholly transcendent; thus she is free from any constraints these self generated conditions impose. She is both the material and efficient source of creation. Since the accomplished adept, at least in the role of guru, is considered completely identical to Śakti he or she has a mastery over creation not different from the goddess's. The spiritually

recognized adept is identical to the source of power itself and no longer constrained by the apparent limitations of time and space. When complete identity with Śakti is attained, the Śrīvidyā adept is considered a locus of the original source of power that created time and space but is <u>not governed</u> by any such limiting factors. The practical exercise of power is based upon the notion that its original source is not bound by the ordinary conventions of the dualistic world but merely assumes its form.

Why Śakti and Śiva, the original creative sources, consciously and deliberately chose this dualistic shape and set upon themselves limiting conditions by assuming forms within time and space is not an issue of particular interest in Śrīvidyā sources. If the theological position seems paradoxical or inconsistent, a resolution of doubts, Śrīvidyā maintains, comes when one achieves the religious experience its discipline and tradition teaches.

The most common way in which spiritual authority within lineages is acquired or recognized is direct transmission, that is, the open or implied designation of a spiritual leader (or heir) by an already established figure. The mantle of power is often handed down within lineages as select individuals are designated as the direct heirs of a guru's authority. Gurus effectively transfer their power and authority to a privileged disciple (or disciples) either

through formal ritual or in through an implicit bestowal on a privileged disciple. In other cases where power is not, as it were, transferred in a succession, the inspirational authority of a particular teacher remains the guiding force of a lineage so long as a memory of them persists. Lesser degrees of authority are also common, distinguishing "leaders" or "seniors" by criteria such as devotion to teacher and tradition, tenure, acknowledged spiritual accomplishment (siddhi), ritual expertise or punditry. In effect, the same basic criteria that gurus cite when selecting certain individuals as their heirs.

Though intellectual ability per se is usually not cited as a necessary quality for a traditional teacher, it is clear that the majority of recognized leaders are at least able scholars of their own lineage's ritual and theoretical interpretations. An ability to understand the meanings of key Sanskrit terms and an ability to use them ritually is usually the minimum level of learning. A few contemporary adepts displayed, however, an exceptional ability in Sanskrit and a thorough knowledge of the tradition's literature. Given the intellectual prowess of certain historical figures, the present situation is probably not exceptional; one suspects that the intellectual burdens of the tradition have always been carried by a few individuals and that the majority of adepts depend upon them for

developing interpretive and historical understanding.

The acquisition, transmission and recognition of authority is vital to Śrīvidyā's continuity and to its own understanding of what makes its teachings spiritually efficacious. The criteria used to make distinctions _within_ groups of initiates are the commonly recognized means of acquiring spiritual power, that is, moral discipline, ritual expertise and an exemplary lifestyle. Tantrics such as Śrīvidyā traditionalists do not create a "new" set of criteria but restate and stress those found in the non-Tantric and pre-Tantric forms of Indian faith.

The _Bhagavadgītā_, for example, is often cited by contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts for its direction on these matters. Religious devotion (_bhakti_), yogic accomplishment (including restraint of the senses and an ascetical temperament), ritual and ethical action (_karma_) and spiritual and intellectual power (_jñāna_) form the foundations of authority. It is the recognition of these values in individuals that structures authority within sectarian Tantric traditions. To Śāktas all of these abilities or capacities stem from Śakti who is their primordial source. Since Śakti's power extends over not only the human realm but over all aspects of the natural universe, the accomplished adept too has a similar domain. The key notion, however, is that authority comes when the

mastery of such powers is recognized and interpreted by others: power itself may result from spiritual discipline but authority is a delegated privilege.

Recognition of religious authority is different than recognition of inherent or acquired spiritual power. The authority of a guru is dependent upon recognition of spiritual accomplishment and implies another form of power, that of direct influence over disciples in willful submission. An individual may be considered spiritually adept or vested with particular forms of expertise but the influence of him or her over others as an adept is of a different order than that of a guru over a lineage. The guru's actions or statements, be they mythical, implied or actual, have personal consequences for disciples and effect the transmission of the tradition. Spiritual power merely acknowledged in an individual does not empower them to teach the tradition: this entitlement is granted in the mutual relationship of guru and disciple. Consequently, all gurus are deemed spiritually adept but not all adepts are gurus. It is commonly believed that an accomplished adept may or may not choose to display spiritual prowess and that each has the ability to attract or dissuade individuals from approaching them for instruction.

A guru's influence may extend beyond the immediate realm of disciples and, in many cases, outlives the

historical personality. Thus the influence of the spiritually adept is not confined to a living repository or dependent upon the individual per se. Personal attributes such as emotional stability or ritual mastery lead to spiritual accomplishments (siddhi) that are inherently powerful since, like mantras or yantras, they are deemed a more "concentrated" form of Sakti than other forms within the ordinary world.

Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, views spiritual power not limited by space or time but located within them in the form of particular individuals, actions, objects or places. Authority is the influence or exercise of power "installed" in space and time and as it is acknowledged by others. When an individual is no longer living the effects of spiritual power and the legacy of authority may continue in relics, teachings or disciples, but in practical terms the nature of authority undergoes a dramatic change. The living guru effects direct control of over a course of historical events; as an interpreter of text or tradition his power is considered absolute by the disciple. The acquisition of power (siddhi) results in the systematic dissolution of the individuality of the guru as the state of liberation (mokṣa) is attained while yet living (jīvanmukti). By dissolving the transient personality the guru achieves immortality and an ability to influence events

in the natural and social worlds because he or she has ascended to a level of mastery comparable to the gods.

But in practical terms this power is diffused when the guru or spiritual adept no longer lives in the conventional world. The individual's power does not cease, it may continue either by transference or in relics, but the effective locus of authority changes: the "interpreting" living form becomes the more diffuse and less easily "interpreted" legacy or relic. Similarly, scriptures, which originate in authoritative sources such as Śiva or Śakti and are formulated at particular times and subject to similar effects, have only a diffuse form of power and authority and thus require interpretation from a more concentrated living source. Only the living teacher maintains this direct concentrated power and thus is an incontrovertible source of authority within a lineage. The living teacher takes precedence over all other forms of authority, including scripture, not because his power is of a different kind than others but because he is a more immediate and direct manifestation of the source of power. While living the guru is the quintessential interpreter, like scripture or oral tradition, he or she is also an object of interpretation in retrospect.

Tantrism's emphasis on secrecy can be understood as a result of this structure of authority. Texts or teachings

are secret because they instruct or are themselves considered repositories of power, that is, sources that reveal Śakti's concentrated forms. Gaining access to these sources of power is restricted because their instruction is inherently powerful while it is not <u>necessarily</u> controlled by the authority of a responsible guru. The guru alone decides what is appropriate for each student as well as how certain ideas are to be interpreted; secrecy is the means for effecting control over what might otherwise be misunderstood and "dangerous" to the uninitiated. Hence, Tantric sources are filled with technical and shadowy language purposely designed to conceal and restrict access to potentially dangerous sources of power. A Śrīvidyā adept provides an example:

> Mantras are inherently powerful even though the proper use of power also depends on the guru's initiation. They are a two-edged blade when complete. Without proper instruction, however, they are very dangerous just as a sword is dangerous without instruction in its use. The guru decides which mantra is appropriate for the disciple and then reveals its meanings and secrets. When mantras are printed in books the editor must say clearly that they should not be used without the proper instruction. The danger comes when this is either left out or unqualified people ignore the warnings. Sometimes rituals or mantras should not be printed at all because there is too much risk for misuse.[11]

It is also clear from these comments that secrecy is linked directly to notions of qualification (<u>adhikāra</u>). Qualification (<u>adhikāra</u>) has a textual basis and is a

primary topic in any discussion of initiation (dīkṣā).[12] But the decisive element in practical terms is the discretion of the guru; no matter what objective criteria are accepted as normative, qualification is dependent upon the structure of traditional authority which views the guru as ultimate arbiter.

1. This point is made several times in the Setubandha and implicitly in virtually all of Bhāskararāya's works. Cf., Setubandha's Introductory remarks.

2. Take, for example, the printed editions of Paraśurāmakalpasūtra which must be subject to interpolation according to those adepts who frown upon the pañcamakāras. Because these Śrīvidyā traditionalists cannot accept even the theoretical basis for the makāras they insist that the printed edition has not made a complete review of manuscripts or that their own manuscripts do not contain the "offensive" remarks. In this case it appears to be a matter of doctrinal certitude rather than an error in editing the text. The offended adepts have "sanitized" the text in a rather typical fashion to meet their own needs. The important point is twofold: (1) they wish to maintain a scriptural attribution to the PKS by rejecting its offensive portions but (2) accomplish this by attributing their inclusion to an error in the editing of the printed text. Works are considered scripture only when they meet the approval of the lineage's own tradition and it is not uncommon for the process to include this kind of "selective reading" or censorship.

3. In order to fulfill my vow to adepts to conceal their identities I have simply made up names for both individuals and groups for the profiles and other quotations that have been cited. A list of their real names, addresses and biographical details is available to the examiners. The point, however, is not that the material is authentic but that its being revealed was very much dependent on my relationship to Śrīvidyā tradition as an initiate. The inquisitive and even persistent scholar may not have been as fortunate as I was in the process of extracting interpretive materials. These interviews were usually viewed by the interviewee as "fair exchanges" or dialogues between initiates even when my own participation in the conversation was limited.

4. A significant number of interviews were conducted in English since Śrīvidyā adepts educated in public schools were often quite capable of expressing themselves fully in this medium. In Tamil Nāḍu, Tamil was the main language and it was Dr. Sundaramoorthy who often provided me with clarifications and technical assistance. Outside Tamil Nāḍu our main language was either English or Sanskrit. A fair number of interviews were conducted in the latter in northern and western India. For the technical meanings of Sanskrit terms we depended on our own oral traditions of interpretation, the historical textual sources and other

adepts---often disagreeing or altering according to our own critical standards. Whatever is presented, however, is documented either in conversation or in sources publicly available.

5. A senior adept of the "Guru" Mandali, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nāḍu, October, 1984.

6. A senior member of the "Siddha" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

7. "Nārada" of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

8. I should add as a footnote to this event that the host realized my donation to the project was limited to a gesture because afterwards it was clear, though not stated, that I personally did not approve of this rather expedient method of deciding who was qualified to participate. The host was gracious and not unsympathetic to my opinion but one could sense the disappointment. I was, after all, in a position to be a far more generous a patron. It was implied to all who accepted the invitation to attend the pūjā that some minimal contribution would be made; my limiting this to a gesture was the only means by which I could express my own sentiments without affecting the personal relationship.

It should also be observed that modern Hindus frequently determine who is a "Hindu" based on distinctly racial qualifications. Indians regardless of religious affiliation, for example, are never restricted access to Hindu temples, temple sanctums or the premises of Hindu religious organizations such as the Śaṅkara maṭhas in Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcipuram. In most instances a westerner such as myself is either questioned, given a privileged dispensation or excluded regardless of religious sentiments. One cannot but help feel these distinctions reflect poorly on the Hindu faith in general. In Kāñcipuram, for example, the administrators and patrons of the Śaṅkara maṭha restrict access to the maṭha and to the "taking of darśan" of the Śaṅkarācārya---the common way of expressing respect for him and the tradition. But certain privileged westerners, in this case, myself excluded, are given a "special" dispensation. When I brought this decidedly racial discrimination to the attention of the Śaṅkarācārya himself, he offered no reply but made an exception for me (to the chagrin of the maṭha's administrators). As far as it is known to me, the policy has not been changed. One can also be certain that the maṭha authorities would exclude low caste, poverty stricken Indians as well from the premises.

9. "Naṭarāja" of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

10. These are obviously highly sensitive matters that Indian women, in general, are reluctant to express openly to men even within their own families. I suspect that the general acquiescence on the part of the women I interviewed (even those with whom I had developed a personal relationship over a period of years) regarding these traditional practices does not always reflect their deepest feelings. Since few initiated women would discuss the matter freely it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to document what it is they do feel and think. The general impression, however, was that this kind of cultural "responsibility" carried into their lives as Śrīvidya initiates and there was never any suggestion that one could separate the initiated life from these "duties" (their vocabulary, not mine); also it was clear that observing these traditions was part of their total identity as women within the Brahmin caste whether or not they personally considered it repressive.

11. A Śrīvidyā adept belonging to a Madras-based lineage, January, 1985.

12. Cf., PKS, 1.14f.; HT, p.71-89 which gives extensive references.

Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition in South India
Chapter One
Lineage Profiles

A. Introductory Remarks on the Profiles of Living Śrīvidyā Lineages in South India

The groups selected for the composite profile of living Śrīvidyā tradition organize themselves in three basic ways. They are either: (1) strictly private, maintaining an internal hierarchy with no formal public affiliations; (2) semi-private, maintaining the close knit secrecy of the oral tradition within an inner group of initiates but also engaging in activities that have a public dimension, such as publication or quasi-public ritual performances; or (3) formally public institutions with an internal hierarchy and private tradition that is engaged in public, open forms of worship and instruction of the tradition.

The most common term used by private groups of initiates to specify their formal relationship is maṇḍalī, literally, a "circle". Not all lineages prefer this term, or any other, but those engaging in semi-private activities invariably give themselves some formal designation. Other terms more common in historical patterns of sectarian affiliation such as sampradāya or mata are entirely absent in living tradition. But, as it has been observed, the general term used to specify a mode of conduct is not as

important as the qualifier, thus _ācāra_ or "practice" gains its significance only when combined with a term such as Samaya or Kaula. Southern traditionalists, especially in Brahmin dominated groups, are reluctant to accept any of these more specific historical divisions. As one adept put it:

> The difficulty with saying that one is a Kaula or belongs to this or that _sampradāya_ is that this can mean different things. Sometimes someone says that he belongs to this or that part of tradition and you are not able to say if this means he accepts or rejects certain practices normally associated with that interpretation. For example, is every Kaula actually practicing the use of the _pañcamakāras_ ? No, but this seems to be a standard Kaula tradition if you accept the teaching of certain Tantras or even of Bhāskararāya.[1]

The reluctance the adept expresses above reflects the historical situation: what Śrīvidyā adepts have said about themselves, how they designate their own practice and what they say today, either verbally or in written forms, does not necessarily reflect their practice; nor is the meaning of any common traditional term necessarily interpreted identically between groups. This explains why such terms are continuously redefined in historical works. Contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts are themselves aware of the discrepancies involved in the historical use of traditional descriptions and designations. Yet in spite of these difficulties there is observable continuity in practice

between contemporary groups differing significantly on theological issues; groups that use the same terms of identification in different ways. How lineages describe themselves and others is crucial to an understanding of where they locate themselves in Śrīvidyā's history and in the broader spectrum of modern Hindu faith.

The profiles of Śrīvidyā lineages given below place each private group of initiates within the historical and theological tradition and give an outline of each group's distinctive interpretations and attitudes. In the first profile a greater emphasis has been laid on examining features common to the majority of groups though this particular group does not necessarily express the opinions of the majority on all issues.

I cannot hope to record all the details of my meetings or give intimate portraits of the adepts I interviewed. The materials included are intended to present an interpretive context for the normative values and concepts of the tradition set forth in Part One. Those points of view particular to individual lineages, groups or individuals are contrasted with views expressed by the majority. This is not to suggest that the majority opinion is in any way more "correct" than others but rather is viewed as a guide to what might be deemed the "normative" living tradition.

It is clear, however, that there is no such thing as a

"typical" Śrīvidyā adept anymore than one can stereotype any committed religious person whose personality has shaped and made vital the tenets of his or her faith. There are theological positions and ritual practices shared by a majority, but the majority position does not necessarily imply that the given interpretation is veridical or that one is a more authentic representative of text or tradition than another. As one would expect, in most cases lineages and individuals share common opinions but distinguish themselves on particular issues. No single group maintains all aspects of the emerging normative view and hence there is no one standard against which others are measured. The normative view reflects simply the most common interpretive position on a given issue across the whole tradition. Which position reflects textual, historical and oral tradition best is a judgement reached only through critical analysis and comparison.

From the scholarly perspective in many instances there is simply no "correct" view, but only the tradition's multifarious manifestations and interpretations. For each group and individual their own interpretive stance is held to be <u>the</u> correct rendering of Śrīvidyā tradition or, at least, the one most suited to their own personal religious needs. Sharp distinctions are drawn within the tradition and clear doctrinal definitions pit one group against

another. Living Śrīvidyā traditions continue to engage doctrines and practices with intensity and self assurance in their own faithful interpretations.

Following the profiles is a section addressing specific issues, such as the ritual variations in the worship of the śrīcakra, followed by an analysis of the interaction of private groups and individuals with non-initiates. The majority of initiates of the groups represented here are south Indians and are all based in Tamil Nāḍu. Northern groups and those from other states are handled separately.

B. Śrīvidyā Lineages: Profiles of Faith

PROFILE 1: "Gāyatrī" Mandali

"Gāyatrī" Mandali does not trace its lineage to Bhāskararāya or any other significant historical figure but considers itself part of the Kaula Śrīvidyā tradition. It accepts basic Kaula tenets such as the theoretical ritual use of the five makāras and therefore does not censor its scriptures in an effort to bring them in line with the mores of Brahmin society. The guru around which this semi-private group centers itself was a smārta Brahmin and spent the last years of his life living ascetically but married to a tribal woman of the Narmada hill region. His out of caste marriage was said to have been approved in a vision of the sage Agastya, traditionally associated with the Narmada forest

hill region. His own teacher is also considered a powerful and well-known yogi and lived his entire life in the householder's _āśrama_. The lineage traces itself back at least four generations to gurus who have personally designated a spiritual leader (or leaders) as heir(s) to the line of authority. At present the group divides authority between the guru's widow and his most intimate disciple.

The group formally identified itself as a Mandali while the guru was still living, obtained his permission to publish a private journal and gathered occasionally to discuss theological and ritual matters. They openly refer to themselves as Tantrics, consciously recognizing the term's negative connotations in vernacular Tamil. Their chief characteristic, however, is the claim that Śrīvidyā is the "original" Vedic truth and that the tradition is the most "purely Vedic" among Hindu practices. (Not a claim that is in any way extraordinary if one were considering a non-Tantric group.) They identify the _śrīvidyā_ with the Vedic _gāyatrī_, as is common to all Śrīvidyā, but insist on initiation into the _gāyatrī_ as a preliminary to Śrīvidyā initiation.

Their interpretation of what "Vedic" tradition entails has important consequences on practice and the lineage's transmission. Acknowledging the Tantras as _śrūti_, they do not censure materials by subject but consider only those

taught or mentioned by their guru as authoritative. As a general policy all Kaula works of the Śrīkula are potential theological or ritual resources. Following the normative belief, however, only those ideas accepted by the guru are considered "fit" for interpretation and practice; others are either irrelevant, do not "apply" to Śrīvidyā in its "correct" understanding or are openly rejected.

Among contemporary groups this particular Mandali was theoretically more willing to place themselves in conflict with established Brahmanical values, though in practice this Brahmin dominated group did not purposefully seek out controversy. While posing themselves as somewhat extraordinary at both social and religious levels they, in fact, conform in nearly all respects to the behavioral norms of Tamil Brahmin society.

Their major textual sources are the four key Srividya Tantras, PKS (but with neither Rāmeśvara's commentary or NS considered authoritative), the Śākta Upaniṣads (especially Tripurā and Bhavanā Upaniṣads) and certain other Kaula sources, such as Kulārṇava Tantra. But, like all groups tracing themselves to a common lineage, the focus of their textual interest lies in their own ritual handbook (paddhati). This voluminous work is subject to abbreviation in practice. Nonetheless it sets the standards for ritual practice and implicitly includes all materials considered

theologically acceptable, as well as specialized mantric formulations.

These ritual sourcebooks are the key to understanding not only the practice of the Śrīvidyā adept or lineage but provide, to some extent, the details of accepted theology. Wholly unpretentious in content and offering little self explanation (which is given orally), the paddhatis reveal what is acceptable practice and what is not, if only by omission. Following patterns very similar in content and presentation to such classics as the PKS, NS and SRA, a lineage's paddhati prescribes a ritual for nearly every occasion. The paddhati does not necessarily indicate how particular elements included in the ritual tradition are interpreted or actually practiced. This comes only through oral interpretation and instruction. Occasionally the omission of a particular subject from the written text reflects a deliberate effort to maintain secrecy but since such texts are usually (but not always) meant solely for private use they offer a remarkable wealth of doctrinal and ritual material. To the uninitiated the ritual handbook appears as little more than a series of mantras and ritual indications. But to an initiate skilled in the theological and historical tradition, the paddhati is the best single sourcebook for understanding an individual or group's interpretation of key ritual or doctrinal points. If

reviewed with the practitioner's oral explanation, a paddhati often traces back to Sanskrit sources in the broader tradition (such as PKS, NS or JT) and reveals a particular tradition's synthesis and condensation of abstract principles through structure and method of presentation.

Not all present members of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali have been initiated by the guru. Holding the ṣoḍaśī as the supreme form of śrīvidyā, senior members of the group have initiated their own family members and others into the worship of the pañcadaśī as well as the śrīcakra. The "burden and responsibility" of initiation into the ṣoḍaśī now falls on the widow of the guru who is the titular head of the group though not directly responsible for any of its publication or discussion activities.

The leadership of the group falls more directly on one of the senior disciples of the guru, "Agastya". He is a Sanskrit scholar, expert in Tantric texts and rituals and well known practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine in Madras. His interpretations of oral and written tradition set the standard for all other members of the Mandali though his personal fame as a Śrīvidyā adept and "spiritual personality" is limited in comparison to the now deceased guru. Curiously, this central figure within the Brahmin dominated Mandali is not a smārta Śaiva by birth but an

Aiyangar Śrīvaiṣṇava. "Agastya" is, as it were, a convert to Śrīvidyā. He explains:

> In personal faith I am a Śrīvidyā upāsaka. My guru was the reason I became involved. As soon as I met him I was convinced that he was the only guru I could ever follow, he was spiritually a very powerful man. So I asked to become his disciple and took up Śrīvidyā. This was over twenty years ago. In family custom I continue to follow the aiyangar traditions including the [thick cotton form of the] sacred thread and the traditions of my own Vedic śākha. My immediate family have all been initiated by me into Śrīvidyā and my youngest son has been married to the daughter of my guru. This union shows that we make no caste distinctions and, actually, we consider it a privilege to have her in our family. No members of our [caste] community have ever given us any difficulty for this or other practices since our Śrīvidyā practice is a private, family matter. My daughters are married into other aiyangar families since maintaining caste in these social situations is usually the approved way. Otherwise caste is not our way of deciding equality. All Śrīvidyā initiates are equal.[2]

The social contacts of the Mandali's members, however, are almost exclusively limited to other Brahmins. Like all Brahmin dominated Śrīvidyā groups or individual Brahmin initiates, it is clear that the members of this Mandali would not accept or would make efforts to avoid cooked food (even vegetarian food) or water in the homes of non-Brahmins and would most certainly maintain other caste distinctions regarding marriage and other customs. Caste equality is distinct from the equality of initiation which transcends caste inequality. In this case Śrīvidyā initiates may be

considered equals but not non-Brahmins outside the fold.

As part of their interpretation of Śrīvidyā as the "true" faith of the Veda and in accordance with their belief that the Tantras "restore" these original religious truths and practices, the "Gāyatrī" Mandali specifies that only twice-borns (dvija) may practice Śrīvidyā. By this, however, they mean any person who has received initiation into the Vedic gāyatrī mantra and wears the sacred thread (yajñopavita, or poonal, as it is called in Tamil). All members of the group, men or women, wear the sacred thread and daily perform the obligatory sandhyavandana rituals associated with it. The initiation of women into the Vedic gāyatrī, usually reserved for men, is not only extraordinary but one of the Mandali's means of establishing a ritual and spiritual equality between sexes. Gender equality begins, as it were, with this notion that the Vedic tradition prescribes the gāyatrī and the sacred thread for both sexes--- an interpretation that is disputed by other Vaidikas. All customs concerning the maintenance of thread and Vedic mantra are kept as well, including such regional practices as the manner of its wear, periodic changing and composition.

Initiated women maintain no periods of pollution concerning obligatory rites (nityakarma) regarding either Vedic or specifically Śrīvidyā rituals but do not

participate in the important occasional rites (naimittika) such as śrīcakra worship on the full moon day if they are, for one reason or another, in a state of ritual pollution. The same appears true for men, though their occasions of ritual pollution are rarer and less predictable (such as the case of death in the immediate family).

The group acknowledges a hierarchy of mantric initiation that corresponds loosely to levels of spiritual achievement bestowed on individuals by their seniority in initiation or special expertise. The hierarchy is the usual one found in Śrīvidyā's oral tradition (as given in Chapter Six, Part One) though in this case is designed specifically to include the Vedic gāyatrī as the initial level of entry. In the process of mantra initiation an individual accepted into the Mandali is first given the Vedic gāyatrī if as a male chile he did not undergo upanayana. Female children, who do not ordinarily undergo upanayana, go through the ceremony within the "Gāyatrī" Mandali just as the boys do. Women if they did not come originally from the families of established adepts are first initiated with sacred thread and Vedic gāyatrī and afterwards given initiation into the Śrīvidyā mantras. Following this inclusion of the Vedic gāyatrī as prerequisite to further initiation, the mantras in hierarchical succession from "lower" to "higher" levels of qualification are then given, that is, the mantras of

Gaṇapati, Subrahmaṇya (which aspect was not specified), Bālātripurasundarī, and finally the pañcadaśī and ṣoḍaśī form of kādi śrīvidyā.

The practice common to all contemporary traditions is to give all the mantras up to Bālātripurasundarī at the initial level and to determine the qualification for pañcadaśī on a merit basis. On most occasions this too has been predetermined and an initiate does not have to "wait" to receive the śrīvidyā. Though ṣoḍaśī śrīvidyā was given to every member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, the members insisted that the "leap" from the pañcadaśī form was also entirely based on spiritual merit.

"Gāyatrī" Mandali, like all other contemporary lineages and individuals, maintains only the kādi version of the mantra and traces itself to the Kāmeśvara parampara. According to "Agastya", the Mandali's acknowledged authority on theoretical and ritual matters, the distinction between kādi- and hādimatas is only "mantrawise" and does not entail any doctrinal or other ritual differences. (This would appear to agree with historical fact.) He explained a further kādi/hādi distinction thus:

> Since kādi is the mantra of Kāmeśvara it is reserved for those who by nature lack the Sakti, female aspect in their spiritual personality. This is not determined by one's sex. The Kāmeśvara mantra reflects this "opposite" power while the Lopamudrā [hādividyā] is a more concentrated form of Śiva, the male aspect. Each person's personality is dominated by one or the

> other and most need more of the Śakti aspect. This accounts for the majority using only kādi śrīvidyā.[3]

This explanation found no corroboration and cannot be verified in any written historical tradition. It is worth noting because it is the only explanation maintained by an entire lineage concerning the kādi/hādi mantra distinction and, indeed, one of the few efforts made to explain why these two forms of the śrīvidyā have predominated tradition.

As it is for all initiates, the mantra of Bālātripurasundarī is considered prefatory but not necessary---it may be by-passed if the initiate is deemed qualified. In practice, initiation into the "Bālā mantra" is very rare and almost never a final stage in discipleship. Some groups maintain that initiation into the higher forms of śrīvidyā, such as pañcadaśī or ṣoḍaśī, automatically qualifies the adept for the "lower" Bālātripurasundarī mantra. Hence initiation is given into the mantra by those who actually never formally received the mantra from their guru.

On one occasion an adept not related to the "Gāyatrī" Mandali claimed that initiation into the "Bālā mantra" came in a dream (or vision) of the goddess. This initiation was then followed by an initiation into the pañcadaśī by Lalitā herself. Dreams or visions in which initiation occurs are not an uncommon means of gaining access to Śrīvidyā but do

not often occur within established lineages. One such occasion was recounted:

> I had been told in a dream, I do not know exactly by whom, that I should return to my native village and worship Devī there in the small temple. I went as soon as possible and sat for a long time before her image. I fell deep into meditation when she appeared before me. Śrīdevī was seated before me on a throne and told me that I should do japa of Her mantra every day so that I might gain liberation in this life. She then recited the śrīvidyā and disappeared.[4]

Along with mantra initiation is usually some ritual instruction into the worship of the śrīcakra or the anthropomorphic image of Śakti. This commonly takes shape as a gradual process of increasing ritual sophistication learned over an extended period of instruction. In "Gāyatrī" Mandali, as is often the case, the less experienced initiates receive abbreviated forms of ritual which are expanded into ever larger formats. The abbreviated forms are taken from the larger ritual handbook (paddhati) and are usually compressed forms of the full ritual procedure of śrīcakra worship. Ritual instruction usually includes theological training but this does not appear mandatory. In many cases initiates learn only the bear essentials of the symbology and interpretation of mantric and yantric forms of ritual. In "Gāyatrī" Mandali, for example, ritual training takes a priority while the majority of theological training is given in group meetings.

In other Mandalis more extensive theological training precedes initiation into the mantra and the presentation of a <u>śrīcakra</u> as a personal ritual object.

Another feature of "Gāyatrī" Mandali's "Vedic" interpretation is its rejection of <u>sannyāsa</u> as an accepted stage (<u>āśrama</u>) in the Hindu life. Claiming no precedent for renunciation in the Vedas, the Mandali asserts that <u>sannyāsa</u> is contrary to the spirit of the Tantras which also reject it.[5] The original emergence of renunciation and its acceptance among Hindus is blamed, like most of the concepts this Mandali rejects, on the influence of Buddhists and other non-Vedic sects. They view their task as eliminating and "purifying" Śrīvidyā of these elements and thus producing a pristine form of Hindu faith more consonant with the "undefiled" meaning of the Vedas. Feelings run so strongly against the Buddhists, for example, that in the <u>ṣaḍdarśanavidyā</u>, a portion of the <u>śrīcakra</u> <u>pūjā</u> designed to praise key mantras and teachings of six traditional viewpoints (<u>darśana</u>), the initial spot commonly reserved for Bauddha <u>darśana</u> and the mantra of the female <u>bodhisattva</u> Tara, is filled by the Vedic god Sūrya and a Sūrya mantra.

This position contrasts sharply with every other group with whom I had contact. Others may have not accepted Buddhist views but were not averse to "showing respect", as they termed it, towards the Buddhist tradition and Buddhist

female divinities; this position is in keeping, they affirmed, with the tolerant and embracing attitude of Śrīvidyā and Tantrism in general. Even when disagreeing on important doctrinal points with the Buddhists, the vast majority of adepts expressed deep admiration for the figure of Śākyamuni: a Śrīvidyā adept can "accept" as valuable such texts or traditions without actually "following" them. To "Gāyatrī" Mandali, however, there could be no compromise: the Buddhists and those "influenced" by them could be given absolutely no place in Śrīvidyā. Such "heretical" notions as formal renunciation they consider anathema to the true interpretation of the Vedas.

Consequently, all of "Gāyatrī" Mandali's members are married and none would consider taking formal renunciatory vows. Sexual abstinence was not viewed upon as a virtue (a somewhat remarkable fact considering the position of many Tantras on the subject of "withholding the semen") though the simple, ascetical life was praised within the contexts of marriage.

Unlike other Brahmins, the members of "Gāyatrī" Mandali expressed no aversion to the remarriage of widows but generally rejected sexual relations outside marriage as unacceptable. Marriage is said to reflect the divine relationship of Śiva and Śakti and each partner is instructed to worship the other as an embodiment of the

divine image. Though it is theoretically maintained that in the practice of the fifth makāra, sexual union (maithuna), there is scope for an intimate sexual relationship within strict ritual contexts, this practice has not been part of the Mandali's tradition. The fifth makāra, it is maintained, is qualitatively different than the other four; its appropriateness, unlike the other four, is a matter left to the discretion of the guru. This position would appear to coincide with the views of Bhāskararāya.[6]

According to "Agastya", however, the Mandali's theoretical acceptance of the five makāras does not mean anyone in the present group is deemed qualified for their literal use. In fact, a series of substitutions (pratinidhi) for each makāra was observed in the performance of ritual. For example, for wine was substituted a concoction of milk, honey, ginger and other "non-objectionable" elements. Though it was clear that other members of the Mandali considered "Agastya" and the guru's wife both as qualified to use the primary (mukhya) element of the makāras in ritual practice, the actual employment of these elements was never witnessed. There appears sufficient evidence to conclude that the makāras are not a part of even extraordinary private rites. All initiated members, however, maintain the theoretical legitimacy of the makāras as within Vedic tradition ("...the Āryans, you know, were not vegetarians or

teetotalers..."[7]) and continue to employ substitutes (specified in the paddhati) including maithuna which is externally restricted to a mudrā.

In practice, however, it seemed out of the range of possibilities that any upper caste initiate of any known lineage would actually consume a prohibited substance such as meat or wine or engage in any activity that would cause caste or community problems, even under ritual circumstances. The theoretical acceptance of a controversial Tantric practice is clearly a different issue than its performance and the solution most commonly employed by Kaula traditionalists is a substitution of elements. In some cases it was said that the guru (no longer living and thus beyond social opprobrium) did, in fact, make use of the pañcamakāras or perform the literal worship of the female organ in kāmakalādhyāna, but that this practice was no longer done because no one was qualified. Others rejected these practices either because of potentially scandalous repercussions should even rumors emerge publicly or because of the potential for "misuse" by adepts.

In their acceptance of the interpretive concepts of non-dualism common to the Śākta Tantras, "Gāyatrī" Mandali strongly rejects Śaṅkara's advaita and disassociates itself from the Śaṅkara tradition. Accusing Śaṅkara and his followers of being crypto-Buddhists (pracannabauddha)(not an

uncommon accusation even among historical figures such as Madhva), the smārta Brahmins of this Mandali remain completely aloof from the common practice among south Indian smārtas to identify with the Śaṅkara pīṭhas in either Śṛṅgeri or Kāñcipuram. They likewise reject Śaṅkara's reputed authorship of SL and other Śākta related works, but do so to meet their own theological agenda rather than on historical or literary critical grounds.

The Mandali publishes its own journal for private circulation to which only its members contribute. While members have developed close personal friendships with members of other organized Śrīvidyā groups, they express relatively little interest in other forms of Śrīvidyā. Like other Śrīvidyā adepts, however, many members have gained a reputation for religious expertise in general, especially regarding the use of mantras.

In one remarkable case a "Gāyatrī" Mandali member withheld informing a close friend of his own Śrīvidyā initiation for some twenty years despite knowing this friend to be an initiate of another Mandali. He offered me this information (which I later verified through other sources) as an example of the privacy of the tradition; there was simply "no reason why" he should discuss his own practice unless specifically asked. (They now discuss historical and textual matters openly but seemingly avoid points of

potential controversy.) Across Śrīvidyā traditions one frequently encounters this phenomenon: adepts simply keeping the tradition to themselves unless directly questioned about their affiliations. I have never encountered an instance of an adept denying involvement when confronted with the question, but one must often ask a specific question to elicit a response.[8] The practice of Śrīvidyā remains a private affair even when it is not maintained as a secret.

A strong emphasis is laid within "Gāyatrī" Mandali on ritual elaboration, especially in the form of songs composed in Sanskrit and adjoined to rites such as the bi-monthly śrīcakra pūjā. Pūjās performed by members go on for up to seven hours characterized by frequent intervals of song and silent meditation.

The daily rituals considered obligatory (nitya) vary from lineage to lineage but oral tradition maintains that the śrīvidyā (and all other mantras that are actively recited (upāsana)) must be repeated a minimum of twelve times a day. This minimum requirement is usually more than satisfied and adepts within the "Gayatri" and other Mandalis frequently set aside a specific period of meditative worship in the morning following their bath.[9]

In the case of all Mandalis and individuals it would appear rare for a complete śrīcakra pūjā to be performed everyday in the same manner in which it is done occasionally

(naimittika), though there is no oral or written prescription against such practice. Daily meditation (bhāvaṇā), however, is actually an adumbrated form of the longer worship, and in some cases is a short form of the elaborate pūjā performed without any external compliments, that is as an internal (antar-) rather than an external sacrifice (bahiryāga). The daily regimen usually includes at a minimum an invocation of Gaṇapati for prophylactic purposes, purificatory rites including a yoga oriented breath control in the form of bhūtaśuddhi and, most importantly, a silent meditation (japa) of the śrīvidyā.[10] The time spent may be no more than ten to thirty minutes and concludes with a display of ritual gestures (mudrās) and the offering (upācāra) of some auspicious substance (such as fresh food or flowers) to the image of Devī or the śrīcakra. The long ritual prescriptions that outline a complete course of daily activity found in such works as PKS and SRK are abbreviated. The most common method is an abridgement of the full form of śrīcakra pūjā as it is prescribed in a lineage's ritual handbook (paddhati). Only rarely does a lineage keep a separate shortened rite within the paddhati and the abridgement often differs among adepts of the same lineage depending upon the personal instructions of the guru. Once again, the structure of ritual and practice is almost entirely at the discretion of the guru. Some adepts

either by Samayācāra heritage or by instruction perform no external ritual (bahiryāga) at all, either daily or on an occasional basis. Occasional rites (naimittika karma), however, are rarely foregone completely except by strict Samayācārins who have dispensed with externals for a completely internal, mental form of ritual sacrifice (antaryāga).

Despite claims by "Gāyatrī" Mandali's initiates (including women adepts) that their interpretation of Śrīvidyā is purposefully designed to promote the "equality" of women, in practice their gender roles rigorously conform to the conventions of Tamil Brahmin society. Women are initiated and considered in specified ritual contexts as equals but even in these cases wives defer ritual responsibilities to husbands and limit their participation when male members are present. As one woman explained:

> My husband and I are equal as initiates but I believe he is my spiritual superior. This is not because he is male but because of his own practice. But if we were truly at the same level I would still prefer for him to perform the pūjā and conduct most of the ritual activities. This is because I am busy preparing the food for naivedya offerings and doing other things. I am participating fully in the puja but in a different manner than him. This is what is right for its complete success and as a husband and wife.[11]

This self-proclaimed "feminist" is a conservative Brahmin women who feels an obligation and a willingness to abide by the roles of her cultural tradition. Her equality

remains at the level of spiritual initiation and manifests in privileges of seniority, such as a priority seat during a group ritual or the opportunity for interpretive contribution, affecting all adepts within the lineage initiated after her. In other respects, however, this woman, an accomplished Śrīvidyā ritualist and classical singer, conforms rigorously to the social and religious conventions of Tamil Brahmin society. She often, for example, gives public lectures on general religious matters (never, she says, revealing that she is a Śrīvidyā initiate or discussing in public the details of Śrīvidyā's discipline) or concerts of classical music but defers to the judgement of her husband on the appropriateness of a given opportunity. In effect, her relationship to her husband and other males is not especially peculiar except within the ritual contexts of the lineage. Other women in the Mandali have a less visible role in public as well as a more limited part in the inner workings of the group but all maintain that they are not essentially different from male members with regard to spiritual achievement or seniority. All seem content with (or resigned to?) their position in the structure of the extended family and seek no public distinction between themselves as women Śrīvidyā initiates and other Brahmin women. Their sense of personal, spiritual privilege as full members of religious elite was certainly

clear but did not carry into ordinary social contexts. As one female member put it:

> We are extraordinary in the spiritual and religious sense, that is true. But this need not affect the way others view us. It would cause too many problems to reject or revolt against values that we really believe. Our aim is to show that women are spiritual equals and that in sādhana there is no difference between men and women. It does not really matter who performs the rituals and since I do the cooking, for example, it is more convenient for me to prepare the upācāra and naivedya than to sit for the pūjā as my husband does. I am no less equal and no less a participant in the benefits of pūjā. For me the cooking and attending to other duties is the pūjā. I may sing or be asked to perform certain ritual functions but these are simply part of my role. I do not consider my duties as wife or mother as inequality.[12]

PROFILE 2: "Ānanda" Mandali

"Ānanda" Mandali is also a semi-private group though its publication and ritual activities seek more actively to engage outside participants. The center of the present group is a guru, deceased now about fifteen years, whose reputation as a scholar of Sanskrit and Hindu tradition continues up to the present in his prolific writings and beyond the confines of Śrīvidyā. With the guru's demise the Mandali underwent a major split due primarily it seems to a conflict in personalities between the closest disciple "Nārada" and the guru's own initiated son. The major activities of "Ānanda" Mandali today are solely the work of

"Nārada", his immediate family and associates. They claim the guru's son no longer displays an active interest because his father's books are no longer a source of income. The guru's son maintains that the activities of the organized group no longer reflect the wishes of his father. It is true, however, that there is no longer any publication or semi-private ritual activity continued by the guru's son despite his father's active role. Despite these conflicts there is an uneasy peace between "Nārada" and the guru's son (but little love lost) and little mention made of other when discussing the life and work of the Mandali's guru.

"Ānanda" Mandali also claims a Kaula Tantric heritage and accepts in theory the ritual appropriateness of the pañcamakāras. In practice, no member of the Mandali engages in any such activities nor suggests their presence in the semi-public rituals the group sponsors. Like "Gāyatrī" Mandali and the majority of other south Indian Śrīvidyā lineages, "Ānanda" Mandali's traditions are passed almost exclusively among smārta Brahmins. They maintain no strict caste restrictions and theoretically reject any discrimination based on caste or gender but, like others, conform to the conventions of "orthodoxy" in all but strictly spiritual matters.

While not claiming a descent from Bhāskararāya, the Mandali frequently defers to his interpretive authority.

The guru's published work, consisting of original commentaries and translations into Tamil of KKV and SL as well as a host of mantric compilations and detailed ritual handbooks (paddhati), cites Bhāskararāya and Amṛtananda as major interpretive sources and in other unattributed instances reflects their opinions.

The guru of "Ānanda" Mandali as well as the present active organization exhibits more of the tolerance evinced in Bhāskararāya. The guru's works are liberally sprinkled with citations from across Tantric tradition and pay little attention to sectarian differences or disputes. By identifying Śrīvidyā with Kaula Tantrism and maintaining a positive view towards the Śaṅkara tradition (accepting SL and other works as authentic), "Ānanda" Mandali draws upon vast resources of literature to elaborate its interpretations; the Mandali reflects, what might best be termed, a spirit of inclusion. There is little material within the corpus of Tantric or Vedic literature that brings open disapproval from the group though, like others, they maintain the prerogative to read "selectively". In other words, while virtually any source can be included in the tradition's interpretive structure, only select portions are deemed authoritative. As Kaulas, however, they do not censure materials objectionable to Samayācārins.

Another characteristic of this Mandali's reading of

standard Tantric works in Sanskrit is their propensity to give a regional flavor to interpretation. No other group has published works so clearly intending to make them accessible to those lacking a knowledge of Sanskrit. It is clear though that even "Nārada" has but limited knowledge of original Sanskrit materials and relies upon the guru's published works and on the expertise of others. The guru's Tamil translations and commentaries attempt to draw examples from local lore and relate text and practice to particular places and historical persons from within Tamil Nāḍu. Regarding the Saundaryalaharī, for example, the guru cites the story of Śaṅkara composing the work before the image of the goddess Akhilandeśvarī near Tiruchirapalli. Ritual practices are also given a strong regional flavor; the guru specifies, for example, that the śrīcakra pūjā is to be performed to mark events on the traditional Tamil calender.

New works continue to be published by "Nārada" in the name of the Mandali bearing the initiated name (dīkṣānāma) of the guru. The principal effort is ritual handbook entitled Śrīcakrarcanadipikā, a slightly revised version of the paddhati published by "Nārada"'s guru some forty years ago. The work is continuously updated by appendices proffering further ritual elaborations (for example, a recent addition listing the one thousand and eight names of Bālātripurasundarī as a supplement to worship comparable to

the ritual recitation of the LSN) but the core of śrīcakra worship is structurally identical to that of the majority of Śrīvidyā adepts from at least the ninth century.[13]

This paddhati, however, is different in at least one important respect from that of of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali or most other privately published efforts: it is intended to be available to the public. I have discovered it in book stores throughout Tamil Nāḍu though it is, for all intents and purposes, the identical type of work that for generations has been permitted to pass only between initiates. "Nārada" explained that the group's intention was not that anyone should buy the paddhati and practice its rituals without initiation but that since so many Śrīvidyā initiates have clamored for an easily available ritual reference he felt called to bring this text forward again in the name of his teacher. Emphasizing that his guru had an enormous following and that nearly all contemporary adepts had either been influenced or at least been aware of the guru's life and work, "Nārada" responded that the public availability of the paddhati would naturally draw only those with a special interest. "Nārada's" point concerning his teacher's influence in the past fifty years and the number of initiates appears at least superficially justified. The matter seems to touch at the heart of the secrecy issue:

> We do not urge people to buy this book and believe that only those with a natural urge to be

> interested in this form of spirituality will acquire it. Of those who spend money for it, only a few will take the time to look into it, others will just want to have it---sometimes they do not even know the reason why. To make it available is a service that Gurudev [i.e., his teacher] would approve because he felt, as we do, that Śrīvidyā is for the welfare of all, not only for the initiated. Not everyone can practice what is in this book but those who do will be those most qualified. If some who are unqualified try to use it they will not be able to succeed: Devī or Śiva will cause them to lose interest or will prevent them from continuing. Is it secret? Not really because only those able to understand the secrets will know how to make use of it; for those who merely wish to own it, or have in their pūjā room, or offer a flower to it as a tribute to Śrīvidyā and to the greatness of the guru, then there is no harm. This promotes Śrīvidyā but it does not lessen its power or make it common for all. But at one level Śrīvidyā is meant to be for everyone, printing this book only makes it clear that there is nothing to hide and much to learn from it.[14]

"Nārada" argues that the tradition, as it were, protects itself, either by divine intervention ("...Śiva will cause them...") or by the very nature of the teaching. What he fails to mention is that the text does not come with "instructions", the Mandali does not publish a "how to" manual but merely the ritual specifications with mantras and technical directions. It is comparable to an architect's plans without the written or oral specifications necessary to proceed with the actual building. Of course, a curious person could try to bring the ritual to life without initiated training, but "Nārada" strongly contends that this simply will not occur and if it is attempted the absence of

proper initiation will cut the effort short. His colleague made this comparison:

> Practicing the *śrīcakra pūjā* only from the book is like trying to make [sic] an atom bomb when you have only the plans but none of the needed materials [sic]. Even if you gather all the materials you still need something very special and difficult to obtain, the radioactive uranium. This is like the guru's initiation, it gives you the crucial power to make the ritual complete. But without the guru's teaching and giving the initiation there is only the shell and no harm can come from it; the same with the atom bomb, you see, no uranium, no bomb. Śrīvidyā does not approve usually of obtaining initiation in unspecified ways or without the explicit direction of a guru.[15]

"Agastya" of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, a long time personal associate of "Nārada" expressing some reservations about the public availability of the "Ānanda" Mandali's ritual manuals, noted that he was not as convinced that works such as the "Ānanda" *paddhati* would be immune to abuse or that inexperienced persons might not cause themselves harm by trying to practice the contents. "Nārada" is quick to point out that the *paddhati* does preserve the most essential aspect of mantric secrecy by withholding the actual form of the *śrīvidyā*. While all other mantric formulas are given clearly in the text, each instance for the use of the *śrīvidyā* is marked only by the term "root" (*mūla*), a code indicating the recital of the "root mantra" (*mūlamantra*). This common indication of the *śrīvidyā* effectively limits the "misuse" of the text and "protects"

the unwary. "Nārada" explains:

> Even if someone knows about *mantraśāstra* but does not belong to Śrīvidyā he will not misuse the book because he will know better. For others with no knowledge of the *mantraśāstra* but with an interest in these things, the most secret form is still concealed and this prevents them from doing themselves any damage.[16]

"Nārada", like many other contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts, sees no intrinsic harm in publishing ritual works that have been preserved in the past only privately. In fact, it seems clear that the "Ānanda" Mandali would like to make available an increasing number of mantric works and strongly feels its publications are a service not only to Śrīvidyā tradition but to the world at large. "Nārada" expresses a sentiment shared by a number of contemporary adepts:

> Śrīvidyā is for the welfare of the world. Whenever we personally perform a *pūjā* it effects not only the *upāsaka* and others he asks Devī to bless, it effects the whole spiritual world. At the end of the *pūjā* one says, "whatever I have done or failed to do, let us work for the benefit of the world (*lokasamgraha*)". This shows that Śrīvidyā is performed for the sake of everyone and it has not been designed for selfish purposes. Śrīvidyā *upāsakas* must have the highest standards of morality or else their tradition has taught them nothing. You do not see these moral teachings preached in the ritual handbooks, they must be part of the *upāsaka*'s personality long before he performs *pūjā*.[17]

Even those maintaining a strictly private practice without public dimensions comparable to the "Ānanda" Mandali will insist that whatever Śrīvidyā ritual they perform has a

positive effect on the "spiritual environment" of the entire world. On one occasion a private Śrīvidyā fire sacrifice (homa) was performed to encourage world peace.[18] Śrīvidyā has always maintained that its rituals have consequences beyond the immediate sphere of the adept performing them but these instances indicate the extent to which contemporary adepts consider ritual performances influential in the larger social and political environment. Ritual's transformative effects are not considered limited to those involved directly in the performance and may, in fact, be directed at individuals (or even governments) completely uninvolved and unsuspecting.

This interpretation of the efficacy of ritual and mantras harkens back to a more archaic form of Vedism; a more mechanical view, if you will, of the way nature and society can be molded, manipulated and influenced by what is said and done in certain ritual contexts. Rituals and mantras are deemed inherently powerful and their proper performance, at least to some degree, insures the desired result.

But this position cannot suffice to explain the complexity of the tradition's understanding of ritual. Adepts insist that personal transformation is ultimately the result of knowledge (jñāna), an internal realization that

effectively changes worldly experience, and yet they likewise emphasize the inherent effects of ritual and mantras in particular. This position reflects not only the soteriology of Vedic ritual but incorporates and synthesizes the post-Upaniṣadic emphasis on knowledge, individual self-effort and moral conduct. Liberation as well as spiritual and material satisfaction depend on a combination of elements, including the maintenance of the ritual efficacy of mantras and a personal transformative experience.

Adding to the complexity of the tradition's incorporation of spiritual and worldly aims, adepts are also quick to emphasize that the ritual performance is meant to "gain the grace of the god"; sincere intentions coupled with the performance of ritual injunctions is meant not merely to influence events but to call supernatural and divine intervention into worldly affairs. Without winning the favor of these supporting and directing powers even correct ritual performance would not suffice to bring about the desired results and personal, transformative spiritual knowledge would be impossible. In many cases adepts spoke not only of appealing to Devī or other demi-gods but of petitioning their gurus or other historical figures to intercede. The power of these historical figures is considered available usually as it emanates from their relics, teachings or the lasting residual effects of their

accomplishments.

Thus, in contemporary practice as in historical sources, Śrīvidyā considers spiritual and worldly aims inseparable and interrelated and devises a three sided theology to accommodate its theistic non-dualism. In its most concise form this theology accepts (1) supernormal powers such as mantras as directly intervening in worldly events; (2) the necessity of self-effort to effect personal change; and (3) the influence of divine powers, that is, the "grace" of a deity which is disposed at its own discretion and propitiated through devotion. Each of these elements contributes equally to the tradition's whole theological perspective.

(1) Because reality emanates from a single source of primordial sound it is natural to assume that certain keys, such as mantras within ritual structures governed by rules of initiation and so forth, can directly effect the course of events. Considered naively this approach seems magical, that is, a belief that events are governed and influenced by sounds and actions without visible or, strictly speaking, "scientific" relations. But contemporary adepts are convinced that this belief in ritual efficacy is entirely founded on a "scientific" basis; Śrīvidyā is a vidyā, a "science", they reply, not a mere belief in the supernatural. Its effects may go beyond the ordinary realms

of rational enquiry and depend upon revelation as a textual source and "special spiritual insight" to determine the results but, in the opinion of adepts, Śrīvidyā's science (vidyā) is no less empirical or verifiable than other kinds of "science".

In circles of contemporary adepts the result is a nearly endless discussion of the parallels between the science of mantras and Śākta cosmology and the discoveries of modern science. Since the majority of contemporary, high-caste adepts have been schooled in India's western (British) pattern of university education, most consider themselves familiar enough with the physics of the twentieth century to make comparisons. A substantial number have devoted themselves to a study of parallels between their own mantric and ritual traditions and contemporary science. Their conclusions are predictable: Śrīvidyā only confirms proven scientific facts and contributes to the discussion of the hypothetical.[19] If modern scientists, they maintain, only took these "ancient teachings" more seriously they might, in fact, come to the same conclusions; they could resolve their own scientific dilemmas through an appeal to the Śrīvidyā system. It was clear that to the faithful, Śrīvidyā had perfected long ago the substance of the Vedas and Tantras and that the conclusions of modern science would only confirm these revelations.; some adepts go so far as to

view it as a duty to make these parallels public and to "advance" the cause of science by revealing Śrīvidyā's explanations. As one enthusiastic adept related:

> Śrīvidyā's explanations are not merely materially oriented or mere explanations of the natural world. They have a higher purpose than western science because they provide for the spiritual welfare as well as explain reality.[20]

It should be noted that Śrīvidyā adepts are merely characteristic of a general movement in contemporary India dating from at least the nineteenth century in which the revelations of religious traditions are viewed as reflecting the conclusions of science.

It is clear, however, that this ritual dimension of Śrīvidyā's soteriology calls to mind the more ancient concepts of mantra efficacy preserved in Vedic tradition. It is, as it were, the Karmic aspect of a triadic soteriology, depending upon ritual action and belief in sound as paralleling the natural and social universe. To master these ritual actions and to have been instructed into the use of such mantric sounds is to be able to control events in both natural and social spheres.

(2) One also observes emphasis laid on the role of ritual and mantra in the process of personal transformation. An adept changes the world, at least in some measure, to the extent that he or she changes their view of the world; what effects change in the subject is considered a viable change

in the status of reality itself. In self-effort that seeks transformative knowledge through contemplation, study and other intellectually oriented pursuits (like the interpretation of ritual and mantra), and used by the Śrīvidyā adept to draw upon the rich traditions of Hindu darśana. From the interpretive stance of non-duality, conventional reality is seen as a direct reflection of the mind's self understanding. Adepts suggest that philosophical non-dualism's inherent contradictions (such as how can anything be said at all without the binding conditions of dualism) are resolved only in a direct contemplative experience. The truth of the position, as it were, does not depend upon sound reasoning alone and must, in the words of one adept, "go beyond the limits of reason once reason has come to a useful conclusion".[21]

Self effort and the contemplative investigation of reality reflect the Jñānic or knowledge aspect of Śrīvidyā's triadic soteriology. This knowledge is a completely personal experience though its effects may certainly influence others. The point, however, is that Śrīvidyā tradition incorporates jñāna yoga into its practice and gives equal emphasis to its role in the liberative process.

(3) Śrīvidyā, at all levels of practice and interpretation, is a deeply theistic faith bound up in traditions of Hindu devotionalism or bhakti. How God acts

in the world and even what is meant by "God" are matters of investigation. Divine action and even intervention is not only considered within the realm of possibilities but as a necessary component to liberation. But how is a view of a Creator acting upon its Creation compatible with the view that there is no ultimate distinction between the two? An adept offers this explanation:

> So long as we live in this world or are bound by the limits of a dualistic mind, then we see that there is a Consciousness in creation that is purposeful and greater than ourselves. This is God acting in the natural [and social] world when it is for the welfare of all; what is evil or cruel is the result of human ignorance or perception. The tiger is not cruel because its nature is to kill, this is its nature as God has given it...only humans are cruel when they are ignorant of their god-like nature. But from the standpoint of the yogi everything is clear. The yogi continues to speak of God knowing there is no difference between himself and God but does not act to upset the ordinary understanding of those not prepared for this realization or even to hear of it. Bhāskara[rāya] makes this point very clearly [cf., Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, Introduction], the seer should not disturb those with ordinary views. Is God different than us? Well, at one level, yes, so long as we are ignorant but from another, higher point of view there is no difference at all. As Being and Consciousness together, God acts in perfect knowledge which only realized beings (jīvanmuktas) are capable of fully understanding. Until then we must try to understand what they say and have faith that God wills what is good even when we do not understand. There is no conflict between [these positions] in my own spiritual understanding because everything is resolved when one no longer tries to make everything perfectly rational. So long as you stay at the intellectual level you will see a contradiction between all these things [i.e., mantras, self-effort in meditation and action and the role of grace].[22]

In each instance Śrīvidyā adepts appeal to their own experience to resolve logical contradictions in the theological presentation. It is fair to say that in certain instances it was only my raising the issue that prompted a response; adepts seemed quite puzzled why (or how considering my own initiation) one would see such paradoxes when, to them, none existed. They saw no purpose, as it were, in searching for a rational or logical solution to the "problem" because, to them, no problem existed that was not resolved in their own experiences. Any purely intellectual enquiry into these theological questions was flatly rejected as a waste of time or, at best, a naive and unenlightened perspective. When I proposed to several adepts, and specifically to "Nārada" and "Agastya", the triadic structure of Śrīvidyā's theology they would acknowledge patterns but saw no useful purpose in devising it. (When I explained that it was merely to explain the tradition they responded that a distinction should be made between these spiritually "fruitless" academic exercises and the practice of tradition. As intellectuals they did not protest to the enterprise *per se* as some others did.) They did not believe that the three perspectives entailed any "logical" contradiction despite seeming paradox because of the assurances of textual revelation (that is, their faith in scripture), their observation of adepts who had "realized

the truth" (that is, faith in their guru's and others' experiences) and their own personal experience confirming the tenets of faith.

"Ānanda" Mandali not only publishes a large collection of texts and commentaries but annually conducts a semi-private ritual event that may be one of the largest and most elaborate of its kind in contemporary south India. The ritual is officially designated a gurupūjāmahotsava, that is, a "great festive ritual for the teacher", but centers on the worship of 916 women considered embodiments of the goddess Tripurā. Each woman must be a suvāsinī, that is, married and in an auspicious condition (sumaṅgalī) (that is, her husband must be living, the family must not suffer from some occasional ritual pollution, etc.). The participants are chosen by subscription and much effort is made to raise the necessary funds. The merit obtained from a contribution is certainly a factor in fund raising but the Mandali remains somewhat selective in accepting monies and in permitting individuals to attend. "Nārada" explains the situation:

> Though personally and as a group we do not object to non-Brahmins becoming initiates into Śrīvidyā, for practical reasons only Brahmins can be invited and only Brahmin women worshipped as suvāsinīs. This is because some Brahmin people making contributions would raise objections and withdraw their support. Of course we think any suvāsinī can be worshipped as Devī but we cannot

> expect others to feel this way or to take food with non-Brahmins.[23]

He went on to say that this "of course" did not apply to me personally. It was obvious that it was not Śrīvidyā initiation that permitted me to attend but that as a westerner I could be considered "casteless" rather than strictly outcaste. Not all invitees or suvāsinīs were Śrīvidyā adepts, in fact, only a select few, including all the members of "Ānanda" Mandali and several from the "Gāyatrī" Mandali. The major criteria for participation were a willingness, a contribution and a Brahmin birth. A few known Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts refused to attend because of the exclusion based on caste but it was clear that the majority who did attend felt the caste exclusion to be an appropriate response. As one initiate noted:

> It is unfortunate that some have these caste feelings but it is more important that the function take place since its ritual effects will offset any ill effects. The ritual is intended to produce good and its organizers good intentions insure that this will be the result.[24]

"Ānanda" Mandali did not publicly advertise to obtain participants (since this would not have allowed them to make a caste distinction) but rather solicited within the smārta Brahmin community across Tamil Nāḍu. The affair was held in a spacious gathering hall usually reserved for marriages and other larger, auspicious functions.[25] After purifying the

entire space by a series of ritual offerings, invocations and mantras, "Nārada" explained to me that the whole building would be "made into a *śrīcakra*". In addition to the *pūjā* for the Mandali's guru (*gurumaṇḍalapūjā*) and *śrīcakra pūjā* to the nine sub-cakras (i.e., the *navāvāraṇa pūjā*), worship was also performed for the goddesses Śyāmā and Varāhī (the two other major deities described in *PKS*). These *pūjās* were conducted with the most senior woman of the Mandali ritually presiding. "Nārada", effectively responsible for the organization and fund raising but with no ritual role, remarked, "This is a ritual in praise of Devī conducted by Devī."

Indeed it seemed clear that the *suvāsinīs* in attendance were fully aware of a special ritual role while it was equally evident that only the women of the Mandali and a handful of others had any interest in the actual ritual performance being conducted at center stage. This was, for all concerned, as much a social occasion as a religious event and was conducted, as so many Hindu ritual functions are, in a festive and informal atmosphere.

Seats were designated on the floor where each *suvāsinī* would be worshipped with various offerings, and each place itself transformed into a different part of the *śrīcakra*. While there was no attempt to create the design of the *śrīcakra*, the cakra's sacred geography was clearly intended.

On a stage in the front of the hall the inner trikoṇa of the śrīcakra was however quite literally created. Sixteen women had been selected to represent the sixteen nityadevatās that preside over the sarvānandamāyā sub-cakra and in the center of this triangle, seated on the bindu, was the most senior female member of the "Ānanda" Mandali who had earlier conducted the various pūjās. Each of these sixteen women had been chosen, according to "Nārada", specifically "for their initiation into the mūlamantra", that is, each was considered a qualified Śrīvidyā adept. Younger women of the Mandali, initiated but not yet married, acted as the main supplicants distributing the ritual gifts and reading aloud the pūjā designed for the occasion (essentially an elaborated form of the suvāsinī pūjā described in the paddhatis). Despite the earlier elaborate pūjās, including śrīcakra pūjā, this portion of the day's events was clearly the climax, to be followed by a meal of ritual prasāda that had been offered symbolically to the "śrīcakra". Each suvāsinī was ornamented with sandlewood paste, presented with kumkum that had been offered in the arcana of the śrīcakra pūjā and plates of various yantras including the śrīcakra. Each also received a commemorative certificate while the inner sixteen were treated specially to a ritual painting of the feet and the gift of a new silk sari.

After changing into their new saris, and seating

themselves around the outline of the trikoṇa, the sixteen women were transformed into the presiding deities of the śrīcakra. It was at this point that the various offerings (upācāra) began (specified to be sixty-four and enumerated according to the scheme set forth in PKS, second khaṇḍa) and the ritual concluded with the dismissal of Śrīdevī's presence. Having concluded the formal ritual portion of the day's events (some seven hours of recitals and pūjās including separate groups of women chanting SL, LSN and LTS), the various forms of prasāda were distributed and following the meal, the event began to dissolve. To have departed earlier would have been considered inauspicious and every effort was made to keep the participants involved and within the boundaries of the "śrīcakra".

There was, of course, no ritual use of the pañcamakāras but rather the employment of designated substitutions, such as a mixture of milk and honey for wine. Ritual references to the five makāras were "concealed", as it were, in Sanskrit and recited in nearly unintelligible mantric formulas, the content of which considered far less important than their recital. The "Ānanda" Mandali organizers did not suggest that the affair was "Tantric" to any of those in attendance, presumably because they did not wish to risk a misunderstanding. What is not said, it seems, often spares unwanted or potential discord and "Nārada" intended only to

emphasis that the affair was a ritual of Śrīvidyā and not of "Tantra".

In this annually held event the "Ānanda" Mandali not only reaffirms its commitment to the memory of its foremost guru but creates lasting effects on the community and participants. Months afterwards Śrīvidyā adepts from other groups made mention of this affair and, generally speaking, praised the effort of the Mandali. Some, however, criticized the event and any effort to bring Śrīvidyā into the domain of, what they termed, "popular" religion. As an adept of another group remarked:

> Śrīvidyā can never become a popular religion, its practice is meant to effect the whole world but to be effective it must stay within the lineages of initiates. Such ritual affairs as this only dilute the power of its teachings.[26]

There was never any suggestion of the "Ānanda" Mandali's having broken restrictions on the secrecy of the tradition; even adepts with strong reservations about such "public performance" seemed to object on the grounds of its being a dilution of "pure" Śrīvidyā rather than an inappropriate revealing of traditional secrets. The adept cited above also noted, "They do not recite aloud any secret mantras such as the <u>śrīvidyā</u> and those they do will not do any harm." It would appear then that contemporary adepts consider only a very few elements of the ritual tradition to be strictly secret.

Considering the recent availability of written materials, it is only in the personal meditative encounter and in the exchange between disciple and guru that Śrīvidyā's secret interpretations and rituals are actually restricted to initiates. What is truly secret within Śrīvidyā tradition remains impervious to disclosure, namely, the private, first hand contemplative experience of its adepts.

It is the practice of the "Ānanda" Mandali, as it is with "Gāyatrī" Mandali, that both husbands and wives are initiated into Śrīvidyā. Women are strongly encouraged to participate, as indicated in the semi-private ritual function discussed above, but under ordinary circumstances the bulk of ritual responsibility is left to males and for married women, to their husbands. In one case in which a husband had no active interest in participating he was nonetheless initiated since, according to "Nārada", this was only appropriate. A woman could not be seen as having more spiritual "privilege" than her husband---perhaps a reflection of high-caste social norms. In another case, the father of a Mandali member initiated his eldest son, who displayed little interest in Śrīvidyā, so that it was "appropriate" to initiate his younger son; the elder son, in this case, could not be seen as having lost his family

seniority. Thus it is clear that while the "privilege" of initiation is restricted, criteria other than mere qualification at times affect the situation. In both cases family and social obligations are seen to have had a powerful influence on textual prescriptions and traditional ideals: what is, theoretically speaking, considered to be a purely spiritual qualification is actually governed by a host of other social and cultural factors.

"Ānanda" Mandali deals with ritual pollution in much the same way as the "Gāyatrī" Mandali; women during the first three days of their monthly periods continue to perform only the minimum ritual obligation (usually the repetition of the mantra twelve times) but are in all other ways abiding by the conventions of Brahmin society. "Ānanda" Mandali, however, does not stress as emphatically the spiritual equality of women but nonetheless seems to hold a similar position to that of "Gāyatrī" Mandali. Without making the claim that there interpretation returns to the "true Vedic life", "Ānanda" Mandali is content to believe its interpretation is in line with the traditions of the Tantras.

As in other Śrīvidyā groups, the Tantras or, more accurately, portions of the Tantric literature, are deemed as authoritative as any Vedic sources. "Nārada" expressed an opinion commonly found among south Indian Brahmin

Śrīvidyā adepts and one characteristic of Tantrics in general:

> The Tantras are like a fifth Veda. They are meant to complete the teachings of the Vedas and offer the best alternative in this present age. In Vedic times [i.e., the hoary past] the Vedic Dharma was most appropriate but now people can no longer keep those practices, and neither are they the most expedient way of gaining material and spiritual prosperity. The Tantras do not take the place of Vedic teachings, they are the Vedic teachings on certain matters, especially for our spiritual practice. For religious obligations such as marriage or rituals for our ancestors, the Vedic forms are still used. One must be instructed as to which sources best suit the situation.[27]

The same sentiments were echoed in interviews with members of nearly every lineage I encountered: Śrīvidyā is not considered strictly an alternative to Vedic Dharma, one that vitiates or removes from consideration Vedic teachings but as a natural continuation. While the majority express misgivings about the Tantras if read "unselectively", Śrīvidyā tradition, as each lineage defined its literature and practical interpretation, is never in conflict with Vedic Dharma because it addresses, as Vedic teachings do and in consonance with them, both spiritual and material needs.

Śrīvidyā's domination by high caste initiates in south India has nearly erased any conflict of interest theologically or practically between Vedic and Tantric teaching. Even in two lineages that theoretically accept elements such as the <u>pañcamakāras</u> (undoubtedly objectionable

to nearly all religious high caste persons) the tradition has been "sanitized" enough to bring its performance into an open arena for critical observation. Social pressures and conventions have placed natural boundaries on the tradition's notions of acceptable behavior and even non-high caste members of other groups appear to have adopted patterns of conduct associated with the upper castes, such as vegetarianism and teetotalism (practices certainly not enjoined specifically in the Tantras).

The situation in north India, however, at least in my own limited encounter with north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts, does not seem as rigidly conformist with respect to social conventions as in the south. While I did find Śrīvidyā adepts in the south theoretically condoning the <u>pañcamakāras</u>, for example, I could find none that would admit to practicing them. While several said they knew of others, including their own teacher (such as in the "Ānanda" Mandali), who had been qualified to employ the controversial elements, none would go so far as to accept openly and personally their literal use. In north India, in contrast, I found several initiates admitting openly to the use of the <u>pañcamakāras</u>, claiming that it was only by these Tantric elements that Śrīvidyā separates itself from "lower" forms of "less qualified" religious practice. These adepts did not fear social ostracism or the opprobrium of their peers

but rather considered themselves in a position of religious and social superiority.

In both regional situations the issue was interpreted as a matter of status, the use or rejection of the makāras in actual practice conferred, at least in the minds of the adepts, an elevated self esteem and a comparable social effect. To the southern adepts this status was achieved by conforming to the conventions of caste while in the few cases observed in the north it seemed to have been gained by deliberately rejecting the usual norms. Southern adepts sometimes expressed the idea that their interpretations of Śrīvidyā purged it of "impure elements" still in evidence in the north; they believe also that this "pure" form of practice (i.e., without the pañcamakāras) actually reflects the most ancient form of the tradition or as some put it, "Śrīvidyā without Tantric influences". As we shall see below, to others even the theoretical acceptance of controversial Tantric practices affects their self estimation and the opinions they have of adepts who permit these elements. But for the southern adepts condoning these practices at least at the theoretical level it seemed equally as important to stand firm on the issue. Their position socially was not jeopardized, in fact, so long as they did not let their ideas manifest literally, but the majority felt it was too strong a rejection of Tantric

tradition to reject these possibilities outright. It was "unfortunate", "Nārada" said, that "no one is now qualified for these things" but he strongly emphasized that the most "superior" form of Śrīvidyā's spiritual practice must include them. While fully aware that "others may not understand" the use of the pañcamakāras most adepts condoning them theoretically are willing to admit that they have bowed to social pressure. They emphasize that the levels of "higher qualification" that are required are simply no longer, or only, rarely achieved. In a way comparable to the notion that the Tantras fulfill Vedic teachings no longer practically viable because of the declining condition of society, these adepts maintain that the historical teachings of the Tantras harken back to a time when such fully qualified persons existed and practices such as the ritual use of the pañcamakāras could be considered acceptable and not liable to corruption. Those rejecting the pañcamakāras outright regard their inclusion in Śrīvidyā sources as a perversion of tradition and almost invariably consider any mention of them an unwarranted interpolation. These interpolated elements, in their view, have rather unfortunately taken root as a result of "Tantric influences" that can be weeded out only through a careful, selective rendering of text and tradition.

PROFILE 3: "Siddha" Mandali

The "Siddha" Mandali has not organized itself as formally as either of the two discussed above but does acknowledge a common lineage from a single guru. The group neither publishes nor organizes large semi-private events on the scale of "Ānanda" Mandali. Its adherents also form one of the most diverse groups in that each has received a very different form of the lineage's teaching and maintain only loose ties with other members of the lineage.

Unlike the other two Mandalis, "Siddha" Mandali has no living central figure or figures and splits internally on a number of interpretive issues. While claiming a direct lineage from Bhāskararāya, the group appears to differ from his interpretation in a number of important respects. They do not trace themselves through the line of Umānandanātha or through the lineage leading to Rāmeśvara but through yet another of Bhāskararāya's disciples (though they do not say which one). Their claim is, of course, impossible to substantiate but from every indication (including a number of interviews in Bhāskararājapuram and with other adepts) it is not impossible since Bhāskararāya was said to have left a least a dozen close disciples.

One key figure in the tradition has now formally taken <u>sannyāsa</u> though he remains living within his own extended family. His family has constructed a small retreat for him

and a shrine for the worship of Lalitā and the śrīcakra on the family premises. The "Swamiji", as adepts and family refer to him, is a grandfatherly figure who has gained some popular notoriety. After the death of his wife he followed in his own father's footsteps by entering the fourth āśrama. He remarked, "...while the Tantras do not require sannyāsa neither do they prohibit it." The lineage's guru, who is referred to only by the name of his village, did not, according to the "Swamiji", himself undertake formal renunciation but neither did he reject it. This position, the group maintains, was actually the view of Bhāskararāya though there appears no corroborating evidence in his works. In fact, it would seem that Bhāskararāya, if he did not reject sannyāsa , certainly did not make himself an example or encourage it for others. Other contemporary groups reject the idea that Bhāskararāya theoretically accepted sannyāsa .

The split in Śrīvidyā over even the theoretical acceptability of formal renunciation runs deep, as even these few examples demonstrate. No contemporary lineages appear to make sannyāsa a formal requirement, nor do any contend that it is necessary stage on the path to liberation. In the spirit of the Tantras, in fact, most do not encourage it even if they condone it as an acceptable practice. The "Swamiji" remarked that his lineage had

produced many sannyāsins but none that had not first passed through the householder stage. This passage through householdership (gṛhastya), he said, was a requirement for all Śrīvidyā adepts and, while he did not criticize the Śāṅkara tradition openly, he mentioned that Śrīvidyā tradition was, in this respect, markedly different than that of Śaṅkara.

"Swamiji" did, however, accept that Śaṅkara was the author of the Śākta and mantra texts attributed to him but that Śrīvidyā was only an aspect of the Śāṅkara tradition and that the Śāṅkarites do not devote their full attentions to the subject. Other members of the lineage express a deep reverence for the historical Śaṅkara and considered him a Śrīvidyā adept but do not in any way identify their tradition with his lineages. Given the popularity of eldest contemporary Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcipuram among south Indians (and especially smārta Brahmins) it is possible that this feeling of relationship on the part of "Siddha" Mandali is a recent situation. If the lineage does, in fact, trace itself to Bhāskararāya, it is unlikely that earlier members saw any connection between themselves and Śāṅkara tradition. This distance is still maintained on several interpretive issues such as the Śāṅkara tradition's acceptance of sannyāsa without first entering the householder stage.

"Swamiji", like all other members of the group, held a

complex view regarding caste and initiation. There are no non-Brahmin members of the group and no women initiates though they acknowledge the possibility of initiation for any person regardless of caste or gender. Śrīvidyā initiates who are non-Brahmins (or non-traivarṇikas) can be considered equal only in respect to the tradition's rites and spiritual practices but in every other respect must abide by conventional caste norms. Women must abide by the ritual conventions concerning pollution and are theoretically restricted from performing even the obligatory rites (nityakarmas) during their periods. In this Mandali only the ritual prasāda can be shared between initiates of different castes while all other forms of cooked food and water are treated according to caste restrictions. This too seems to run directly counter to Bhāskararāya's own views, though the "Swamiji" along with other adepts, maintained that this dual standard was also Bhāskararāya's true intention. In his own words:

> It is clear when we are Vaidikas and when we are Tantrikas. It is important not to confuse the two. Tantra is a special teaching that does not depend on caste while the Vedas specify exactly who is qualified for what teachings depending on birth. There is an ordinary world and a spiritual world and the two sets of teachings are formulated to meet each requirement.[28]

The "Siddha" Mandali, then, maintains that Śrīvidyā is perfectly egalitarian only in certain religious contexts but

that its standards of qualification do not apply in ordinary social situations. Brahmin Śrīvidyā adepts of other lineages severely criticize this view as hypocritical though they themselves do not ignore or reject the significance of caste outright.

The place of women as initiates within the group is ambiguous. There were none, the "Swamiji" noted, because concepts of ritual pollution limit their daily required participation and because "their husbands completely fulfill the ritual obligation." This view in some measure discounts the merits of individual practice and takes a collective or family view of initiation privileges: what one member (i.e., the male head of the household) performs suffices and affects all the family members equally. But this too is subject to modification since "Swamiji" admitted that it is only the initiated adept that gains all the benefits (i.e., liberation) of the spiritual discipline (sādhana). He was insisting, in effect, that liberation remains a personal event and can be brought about only individually; non-initiates, including wives of initiates, would gain only a "partial" effects of proxy practice. In this case the theoretical acceptance of any person regardless of caste or gender distinction did not appear to have any actual parallel.

In direct contrast to Bhāskararāya's views the group

rejected the actual use of pañcamakāras but retained symbolic substitutes (pratinidhi). It was again a case of there no longer being any person qualified for the "higher teachings". Though aware of Bhāskararāya's insistence on the ritual use of the pañcamakāras, members of the group saw no contradiction in their interpretation. As a rule, where Tantric views seem to run afoul of standard Vedic traditions or caste conventions it is always the Vedic view or social norm that prevails. Thus even in ritual matters the "Siddha" Mandali does not, as others do, allow full participation for women or non-Brahmins though by calling themselves Kaulas they could not reject theoretically Tantric egalitarianism.

Another member of "Siddha" Mandali, "Purohita", is a domestic priest (purohita) by profession. Performing only those rites deemed ritually pure (and thus not involved in death rites but perhaps for inauspicious occasions, such as the ritual "removal" an astrological fault (doṣa)), "Purohita" brings his Śrīvidyā practice directly into his professional life. Acting as a consultant and sometime astrologer, he has developed a reputation for mantraśāstra that is, he says, known to be a direct result of being a Śrīvidyā worshipper. He initiates, for a fee, persons with specific needs (such as the desire for progeny or the dispelling of some evil) into a host of mantras but never

into the <u>śrīvidyā</u> unless they are deemed qualified to be members of the Mandali. This qualification for Śrīvidyā, he says, he alone does not determine but rather makes in consultation with other more senior lineage members. He openly tells his clients that he has obtained his abilities by the worship of Devī in the form of the <u>śrīcakra</u> but usually offers no further explanation. While non-initiates do not refer to him specifically as a "Śrīvidyā adept" they clearly take him at his word regarding the source of his powers. One person noted that he felt "Purohita" was no ordinary domestic priest because "he knows many secret mantras of Devī."

"Purohita" noted with pride that because his residence was within the old city of Madurai and very close to the Minaksi temple, he felt, as it were, close to the divine "power supply"; his living within the ancient sacred geography of the temple's <u>vastumaṇḍala</u>, he strongly contended, had a significant and salubrious effect on his spiritual and, consequently, on his professional abilities.

"Purohita's" extensive contact with non-initiates as a religious professional offers an example of Śrividyā brought into a more popular setting. One of the most noteworthy ways is by the initiation of non-initiates into the <u>prayogas</u> of the <u>Saundaryalaharī</u>. These ritual instructions treat each verse of the <u>SL</u> as a mantra and prescribe the drawing

of a pre-determined maṇḍala and the verse's recital a specified number of times for a certain period. For example, the prayoga for SL, verse 31 is prescribed in order to obtain royal or governmental favors, popularity or the fulfillment of any desire. The yantra of this verse happens to be the śrīcakra (specified only for this and verse 22) which should be inscribed on a plate of gold or five metal alloy; the verse is then to be recited 1008 times a day for forty-five days while facing east with the yantra held in the palm of the right hand spread over a piece of red silk. After this ritual recitation of the verse is completed, the prayoga further enjoins the recital of LSN and offerings of cooked rice, pāyasam (a sweet mixture of rice and milk), gram cakes, coconuts, grapes and bananas for the yantra.[29]

These elaborate injunctions, comparable for all fifty-one verses, "Purohita" notes, are usually too rigorous for even the most committed person, hence allowances and modifications are made in order to make the practice more accessible. He says that he himself has devised these changes based on his own judgement and as he has been "instructed". He further notes that only a few of the prayogas are prescribed because, "they suit all occasions and fulfill all such needs." "Purohita" has been giving instruction in the SL prayogas for a number of years though recently he has favored other less elaborate forms of

instruction such as mantra initiation of a "lower deity". These, he says, are more faithfully carried out and more desired since they do not require any skill, such as the ability to recite or read a complete Sanskrit text. As for the success of these efforts one can only say that "Purohita's" reputation has not suffered and his list of clients continues to grow. He says:

> I believe it is because Devī has blessed me and given me accomplishment (siddhi) in Śrīvidyā that I have been successful. Few people are actually qualified for the śrīvidyā and all the obligations of sādhana but many can be helped or their spiritual progress aided by these lesser mantras and teachings.[30]

As a further result of this professional work, "Purohita" notes that many persons he has instructed or initiated now possess a śrīcakra, keep it in their home and "regularly make some offering to it." He has, in effect, contributed to the increasing popularity of the image and at least to some extent influenced the understanding of non-initiates. Though he has not purposefully undertaken to draw Śrīvidyā into a popular setting there can be little doubt that he has used his own initiation and its suggestive powers to influence others and to work to his own personal advantage. While accepting this "professional role" as Śrīvidyā adept instructing non-initiates, "Purohita", like other adviser/astrologers, believes that his privileged membership into the fold entitles him to work for "the

benefit of others." The role itself seems to be an extension of the tradition's view of practice as being in the service of humankind and as having cosmic implications. Might not such instruction be turned towards evil or destructive motives? "Purohita" explained that all instruction is limited to specific ends and then monitored over a period of time, he "accepts the responsibility" of whatever he teaches to non-initiates but is certain that "Śakti will not permit" any misuse. Divine intervention again plays a pivotal role in maintaining the secret aspects of the tradition and as a guardian against its misuse or misinterpretation.

Regarding certain interpretations of Śrīvidyā ritual, "Siddha" Mandali is keen to emphasize its acceptance and following of Bhāskararāya. For example, though in seeming conflict on a number of other issues, the Mandali's adepts are adamant in their rejection of the śrīcakra's image with the three outermost circles (the so-called vṛttatraya) surrounding the sixteen petalled lotus. Each of the six members of the Mandali with whom I had contact made it a point of showing me their personal śrīcakra in order to emphasize not only their adherence to Bhāskararāya's interpretation (cf., Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya, v.4) but to pronounce solemnly that this is indeed the only acceptable form of the śrīcakra for ritual purposes. One member was

aware of the division within Śrīvidyā on this issue and of the theory of three distinct sampradāyas or traditions (see Part One on the śrīcakra) interpreting presence or absence of the circles, but rejected the other views as lacking "textual authority". The mere oral tradition specifying the presence of the vṛttatraya with or without pūjā is rejected on the grounds that no established source, including Bhāskararāya, gives a ritual scope to this portion of the yantra. There is, in the minds of the "Siddha" Mandali, no other justifiable position. "Swamiji" observed:

> If the vṛttatraya were meant to be three outside circles [instead of three circles separating sub-cakras] there would definitely be a specified list of devatās. But none of the Tantras mention it and those who draw the śrīcakra with three [surrounding outside] circles simply misunderstand the instructions. The three circles are actually as Bhāskararāya says [that is, separating the sub-cakras].[31]

But as we have noted, "Siddha" Mandali is not as rigorous in its maintenance of Bhāskararāya's views on other issues. There can be little doubt that social and historical circumstances have effected serious changes in the lineage's interpretations. On controversial issues such as the use of the pañcamakāras they have become far more conformist than the deliberately defying Bhāskararāya. There is every reason to believe that, like their historical/spiritual mentor, they have not been immune to the sentiments and pressures of community and politics.

That Bhāskararāya could write about and apparently practice openly the full extent of Kaula ritual is as much a testimony to the values and pressures of his age as it is a reflection on the present social and political climate in south India.

1. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, November, 1984.

2. Madras, December, 1984.

3. Madras, January, 1985.

4. This account comes from a Śrīvidyā adept noted as a Tamil scholar and lacking any knowledge or formal training in Sanskrit. He belonged to no lineage and claimed his initiation to have come directly from the goddess. His understanding of Śrīvidyā was to contemplate mentally the anthropomorphic form of Tripurasundarī and to then mediate upon the <u>śrīcakra</u> by reciting the <u>kādi</u> <u>pañcadaśī</u>. He performed no other rituals nor had any particular interest in historical or theological sources.

5. This is only implicit in the Tantras by their affirmation of the "completeness" of the married state. I have not come across any direct refutation of renunciation though its unsuitability in Tantrism would appear to be a common element in the majority of oral traditions.

6. See <u>Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya</u>, v.12.

7. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

8. I am told that a similar situation exists among the ascetical followers of Gorakhnāth. Though their physical appearance gives indication of their affiliation (that is, their slitting of the earlobes and hence the name <u>kanphata</u> yogis), to discover their lineage and specific affiliations one must ask a specific set of questions concerning the guru. This information was provided to me by David White who is presently preparing a study of the living Gorakhnāth traditions.

9. According to "Agastya": "The morning may be inconvenient and that is why many <u>pūjās</u> because of their length are conducted in the evening. But in the morning there is less interference spiritually. The mind is in a more lucid state because one has not spent the day troubling over worldly affairs or becoming annoyed by the difficulties of job or family. We encourage any member of the Mandali to set aside a specific time for <u>pūjā</u>, even if this is only a few minutes in the day. And, of course, the morning is preferable but not always possible. This develops discipline and the formation of good spiritual habits."

10. On the general practice of these elements of the pūjā see HT, p.141ff.

11. A senior member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madurai, November, 1984.

12. A member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

13. The general pattern of this ritual is outlined by Gupta in HT. The individual paddhatis of lineages specify the details and the actual mantric content of the ritual. It is in these very detailed remarks that the doctrinal positions and ritual practices of a lineage become increasingly apparent. One must be especially careful, however, since the presence of a theoretical point, such as the inclusion of the pañcamakāras does not necessarily mean actual, literal practice. By oral explanation and first hand observation, the paddhatis come alive and offer the most comprehensive understanding of a group's interpretive posture. These profiles intend to draw out the salient points of theology and the important distinctions between Mandalis.

14. "Nārada", Madras, January, 1985.

15. "Kārta", a member of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

16. Madras, December, 1984.

17. Madras, January, 1985.

18. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, has developed a homa sacrifice on the model of those prescribed in Vedic traditions. For a brief description see HT, p.123f.
This particular event occurred in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia in 1976 under the direction of an adept of the "Guru" Mandali.

19. In one example an adept made a theological parallel to Einstein's classic equation, E=Mc2. The Energy component, the adept related, is nothing other than what we call Śakti while the Mass and Constant are Śiva. But both are equal, as the equation relates, and the two refer to a common reality which, he extrapolated, was only one in the final analysis. Such comparisons are frequently made by contemporary adepts who wish to bring their faith "up to date", as they say.

20. A member of "Siddha" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

21. A senior member of "Ānanda" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

22. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

23. Madras, January, 1985.

24. Member of "Ānanda" Mandali, attending the ritual, Madras, January, 1985.

25. Since it was not the "marriage season" the proprietors were only too willing to oblige and even to offer a "concession" on the cost of the facility. Catering facilities (strictly Brahmin, of course) were supplied to provide the ritual naivedyam for the pūjā---the ritual purity of the cook food taken for granted by the organizers and participants.

26. A member of the "Siddha" Mandali, Madurai, April, 1985.

27. A senior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, November, 1984.

28. In an interview conducted in Madras, December, 1984.

29. The prayogas are listed in various sources but most frequently as appendices to the printed editions of SL. The known editions that include the prayogas are listed in the Bibliography. A detailed study could be made of the whole practice of these prayogas since they are, in a way, a completely unique phenomena. No other text in Śrīvidyā, or in Indian literature, as far as I know, is used in a comparable way. Their history as well as their practice remains obscure but surely the key to unravelling their mystery lies in the living Śrīvidyā tradition which interprets SL and considers it a primary source.

30. Madurai, November, 1984.

31. Madras, December, 1984.

Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition
Chapter Two
Lineage and Individual Profiles

PROFILE 4: "Samaya" Mandali

The "Samaya" Mandali claims to follow the Samayācāra according to the interpretation of Lakṣmīdhara though they do not claim him (or the south Indian Upanisad commentator Rāmānanda about whom they had never heard) directly as part of their lineage. They are led by an elderly smārta Brahmin man, "Jyotiṣa", who has gained a reputation not only as the leader of this semi-private group but as an astrologer and religious adviser. The group takes its actual name, as does "Ānanda" Mandali, from the initiated name (dīkṣānāma) of its long deceased guru.

There are no non-Brahmin members of the Mandali and, according to "Jyotiṣa", this is appropriate for Samayācāra since it restricts membership to traivarṇikas "by definition". Based in Tamil Nāḍu, the group does not accept any other Brahmin castes in the immediate region as being twice-born (dvija). "Jyotiṣa" was not aware of Lakṣmīdhara's statement in which he says twice-born castes may follow only Samayācāra but that all castes are not restricted from following it. The "Samaya" Mandali interprets Lakṣmīdhara as limiting Samayācāra to twice-borns and maintains that only Samayācāra faithfully maintains the

"true interpretation" of Śrīvidyā. Lakṣmīdhara is continuously cited as the historical authority and "Samaya" Mandali strongly opposes the inclusion of Kaula elements such as the pañcamakāras. These "are not part of Śrīvidyā and are in texts influenced by Tantrics", according to "Jyotiṣa".[1]

It is clear that even the term Tantra is considered derogatory to the members of this lineage who speak with self assurance of "pure Śrīvidyā". The Mandali views a major part of its mission as disposing of the "Tantric influences" in Srīvidyā. They consider themselves entirely "Vedic" in practice and values and maintain that Srīvidyā is the secret teaching contained "within the Vedas" meant for only the few capable of understanding it. This opinion concerning the "original" and "secret" teaching of the Vedas is, of course, not uncommon but, unlike other groups, Samaya Mandali makes a very deliberate effort to distinguish "Veda" from "Tantra". The latter is totally unacceptable though "Jyotiṣa" admits that certain works such as the VT and JT are, for the most part, acceptable because they "do not openly express Tantric ideas like the pañcamakāras".

"Samaya" Mandali casts Śrīvidyā as a faith completely in consonance with conventional Brahmin values and practices and occasionally publishes volumes of essays asserting these positions. As a semi-private group their published work is

neither defensive nor apologetic but is unqualified in its affirmation of the Samayacāra interpretation as the only legitimate form of Śrīvidyā. Like other groups they raise funds for such efforts by subscription and publish what are popularly referred to as "souvenir volumes".[2]

The Mandali maintains, what it terms, "close personal ties" with the Śaṅkara maṭha of Kāñcipuram and identifies its own practice and tradition strongly with the Śaṅkara tradition. In each of its souvenir volumes the group has obtained the "official" sanction and blessings of the presiding Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcipuram maṭha. This traditional affiliation draws them into the heart of Śaiva-Śākta and smārta Brahmin orthodoxy, at least as it has been represented for at least the past fifty years. The Mandali views the historical Śaṅkara as a leading figure in the history of Śrīvidya and also reveres the works attributed to Gauḍapāda. "Jyotiṣa" claimed, as several other adepts belonging to other lineages (some even hostile to the Śaṅkara tradition), that the present Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcipuram maṭha regularly performs śrīcakra worship in private. Furthermore, he maintained, the maṭha does not make this public in any way other than by showing support for groups that involve themselves in Śrīvidyā tradition or by performing a few select public forms of worship.[3] Śrīvidya rituals, according to "Samaya" Mandali, should

remain secret and private events in which participation and even observation should be strictly limited.[4]

Because of its rigid ideology the textual sources of the "Samaya" lineage are limited to works that betray no Kaula Tantric influences, such as the those attributed to Śaṅkara, Lakṣmīdhara and stotra works such as LSN and LTS. Unlike other groups that engage in a selective reading process to eliminate "offensive" remarks, "Samaya" Mandali completely rejects any texts bearing Kaula trademarks. The ritual handbook (paddhati) of the group, however, is not at unusual except in its omission of the pañcamakāras and kāmakalādhyāna. In other words, the paddhati agrees in most respects in form and content with that of any Kaula oriented group or with such classical references as the PKS, NS or SRK. In the case of the kāmakalādhyāna there are other Brahmin dominated groups who, while disapproving of the abuse of this practice has fostered, nevertheless do not reject it as a "pure, internal form of meditation."[5] The "Samaya" Mandali, however, takes a strong stand on the issue as a matter of principle. According to "Jyotiṣa", the practice is excluded from the paddhati because it has led to abuse (i.e., moral depravity) by "Tantrics".

> This is a Tantric practice that has seeped into Śrīvidyā because Tantrics took an interest in the tradition from a very early period and have had a corrupting influence on its practice.[6]

Perhaps the chief ritual characteristic of the group is its use of the so-called Samaya form of the *śrīcakra* which it has apparently adopted from Lakṣmīdhara. They are the only known group in south India actually following this particular ritual specification. This transposing of the cakra's configuration is intended as deliberate effort to distinguish Samayācāra from Kaulācāra, the common positioning considered the "Kaula form of the *śrīcakra*". (In the Samaya form (see Diagram B, Appendix 2) the *śrīcakra* is turned "upside down" from its common positioning such that the five major Śakti triangles are transformed into upward-facing Śiva triangles. The *bindu* is then repositioned in the space above the central triangle. See also Part One on the *śrīcakra*.) Unfortunately "Jyotisa" did not specify how this repositioning of the *bindu* affected the performance of *śrīcakra pūjā* and the relative positioning of the cakra's presiding deities. He simply replied that there are no major changes in this respect, despite the apparent disparities involved: the Mandali's *paddhati* confirmed that no alteration in the placement of deities is indicated.[7]

In other respects, however, the group seemed to have only a limited understanding of the content of Lakṣmīdhara's views and relied on its own oral traditions for interpretation. This has led to glaring discrepancies

between what Lakṣmīdhara interprets as Samayācāra and the practices of the Mandali: most evidently, the caste basis of membership which stands in conflict to Lakṣmīdhara's opinion.

Effectively, the Mandali limits membership to Brahmin males though women participate in their capacity as wives and daughters of initiates. "Jyotiṣa" does not theoretically oppose the initiation of women but maintains that the restrictions of ritual pollution (following the conventions of Tamil Brahmin society) make it "extremely difficult" for women to fulfill Śrīvidyā's ritual obligations. During the ordinary periods of ritual pollution, according to "Samaya" Mandali, women would not be able to perform even the minimal obligatory rites (nityakarma) such as the daily repetition of the mūlamantra. This eliminates the practical inclusion of women as initiates and full ritual participants.

"Jyotiṣa's" remark that Śrīvidyā is a "purely Vedic teaching" was meant to suggest a strict adherence to caste laws as they are popularly interpreted. Unlike other groups, families are not initiated as a whole nor male members as a matter of course. Rituals remain restricted to the home though on the occasion of past publications semi-private pūjās were held to celebrate the event and included the performance of Śrīvidyā forms of fire sacrifice (homa).

"Jyotiṣa" said that no future events were planned and that the work of the group remains essentially private. Expressing strong approval of the Śaṅkara maṭha's ritual activities, he emphasized that their public Śrīvidyā practices were limited almost exclusively to the administration of the Kāmākṣī Temple of Kāñcipuram in which a śrīcakra before the image of the goddess is worshipped regularly. He did claim, however, that Śrīvidyā was the center of the Saṅkarācārya's personal devotions but that this fact is kept secret. In support of this he offered the example of the Śaṅkara pīṭha's open encouragement of Śrīvidyā ritual performances and publications. While this is undoubtedly true, the pīṭha also supports a host of religious activities that have little to do with Śrīvidyā and seems generally to encourage other smārta forms of worship.

"Jyotiṣa's" work as an astrologer and religious adviser involves the use of the SL prayogas in much the same way as it has already been observed. In other words, he took it upon himself to abbreviate and alter the textual prescriptions and to distribute, what he termed, "lesser mantras" as well. "Jyotiṣa" attributes his success as a religious adviser, though he is not a domestic priest by profession, to his being a Śrīvidyā adept. This admission of involvement appears to be the extent to which he is

willing to let non-initiates know of his personal practices. Among the semi-private groups I encountered the "Samaya" Mandali is one of the most restricted in access and limited in its outside contacts. It is nevertheless an important group because of its positions concerning caste and gender, as an interpretation of the Samayācāra and for its strong connections with the Śaṅkara tradition.

PROFILE 5: "Guru" Mandali

"Guru" Mandali is a private group and yet maintains a public form of institutionalized Śrīvidyā worship. Living members of the lineage do not trace themselves to a single figure though two elders are today its guiding forces. There are, therefore, at least two distinct lines of transmission flowing from the two most senior members but, what is termed, a "very close spiritual bond" between all. Though at present the group does not organize itself as a "maṇḍalī" as formally as the others so far mentioned, it nonetheless acts as group in addition to individual, private activities. It has not yet published any works but plans to set up its own press "in order to preserve in print the important works of Śrīvidyā that are difficult to obtain."[8]

While at the level of individual practice there are purely private forms of worship maintained by adepts within

their homes, members of the tradition view these individual ritual efforts as a "service" to one another and to the whole world. Ritual efficacy can and does, according to "Guru" Mandali, have profound effects on worldly events. As "Naṭarāja", one of the two intellectual leaders, remarked:

> Everything a Śrīvidyā adept does or says has an affect on the material and spiritual world, though this may not be obvious to outsiders. These affects are amplified in rituals. You will observe that at the end of each srīcakra pūjā we offer everything that is done for the welfare of the world and believe that it is only when the upāsaka renounces his own gain that even he can enjoy the benefits of sādhana. Śrīvidyā is private and in many ways secret but it was never designed to be selfish. We are helping others, in our own way, to reach their goals. Rituals are only one way; a Śrīvidyā adept must be completely moral, a standard of excellence, the kind of person that one does not think as Hindu, Muslim or Christian but as a spiritual person.[9]

"Naṭarāja's" lofty ideals have not always been maintained in practice, he admits, by the other members of the group. But in his own limited actions this smārta Brahmin has sought to revolutionize the values of his caste community while maintaining throughout that he is "an orthodox Vaidika." As a Brahmin community leader he has openly advocated a reassessment of caste restrictions such as the sharing of food and water with non-Brahmins. These suggestions, he notes, have not always been greeted with enthusiasm.

The dual standard observed in the "Siddha" Mandali

above, for example, undergoes an important shift in the practice of "Guru" Mandali. While holding, for example, that only traivarṇikas are entitled to certain "purely Vedic" rites such as upanayana and the Vedic gāyatrī, these prescriptions do not limit Śrīvidyā to twice-borns. There are, effectively, two sets of rites and restrictions, each with its own qualifications and limitations. The "Vedic" prescription obtains for traivarṇika caste initiates only when it does not interfere with the principles of Śrīvidya as the Mandali interprets them. Thus when a Śrīvidyā adept is present he is treated as both a religious and social equal by Brahmin members of the Mandali; non-Brahmins are also members of group and non-twice-born non-initiates are sometimes invited to witness or participate in Śrīvidya rituals.

All Mandali members observe customs that reflect a direct influence of the Brahmin-dominated lineage but Brahmin members consider any effort to exclude full initiates from such things as sharing food or water to be an unwarranted violation of Śrīvidyā's liberal tradition. "Naṭarāja" explains the group's interpretations of caste:

> Śrīvidyā does not use caste as a basis for excluding anyone from participating or even witnessing its rituals. Every sincere person with respect for the tradition can be allowed at least to observe. Initiation is highly selective but we do not base this on caste. It is more important that a person have the qualities that we hold to be ideal. Of course, not all our close friends

> [i.e., initiates of the larger group] are as ideal as we would like and some are very proud of their being very orthodox Brahmins but do hold certain common caste feelings. This is wrong but I think it is natural. As Brahmins we were raised to act and respond in certain ways to people who are not like ourselves. We respect our elders and their ways. But in other ways we say that Śrīvidyā is in perfect accord with the Vedas. Caste has nothing to do with true religious and spiritual attainments, and it cannot be interpreted that way even in the Vedas. Rituals and duties restricted to twice-borns are not privileges but obligations that they must do. I think that Brahmins must do all such rituals not because they are more pure or higher persons but because they are the most impure. Our lineage believes that Śrīvidyā is pure, it is the śuddhavidyā, as Bhāskararāya says. [cf., LSN] We are pure vegetarians, and not only the Brahmin members. We follow in our ordinary lives the Vedic ways but feel that everyone who is pure in heart is entitled to be treated fairly. Not everyone is equal because no person is the same as another. It is our belief that everyone must do what they were born to do but this does not restrict a person based on caste. Not everyone can be a Śrīvidyā initiate, more than sincerity is necessary, but this is all decided individually. A Śrīvidyā adept must not be too emotional a person, for example, because this interferes with clear thinking and gaining spiritual insight.[10]

"Naṭarāja" speaks forcefully concerning Śrīvidyā's egalitarianism and his lineage's interpretations but has not discounted or rejected the values of caste. Still responding directly to the conventions of his community, he resists certain elements he deems oppressive but would, on the other hand, never think of violating most established customs. For example, in matters with broad social implications such as marriage, "Naṭarāja", like the other members of his lineage, expresses a deeply conservative

feeling, a reflection of the Brahmin community's values in which he is an active participant. No Brahmin Mandali member would consider marriage out of caste as acceptable, even to another non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā initiate; feelings about non-Brahmin members in this respect are more ambiguous but it is clear that no one would act either in violation of the instructions of their guru or with the stated disapproval of the lineage's members. The group functions, as it were, like a family in which discord is not uncommon while roles are clearly defined and, for the most part, accepted.

The extent of these role-conforming interpretations is reflected in attitudes towards the initiation of women. While theoretically there is no objection to women initiates, the group does not have any nor contemplates their direct ritual involvement. "Naṭarāja" explains:

> Women must observe the periods of pollution and while this does not mean they cannot become initiates it does restrict their movements and activities during these times. If, for example, a women is menstruating at the time of the full moon, she cannot perform the *śrīcakra* *pūjā*. Obviously men do not have this difficulty. This is why the women in our lineage leave the ritual activity [including the repetition of the mantra] to their husbands or to other male members of the household. The women gain the full benefit of the ritual and actions of the males without having to do all the rituals and meet all the obligations. If any one of them wanted to become initiates into the mantra they would have to observe certain conditions and meet the requirements set for all aspirants, but so far none have expressed this wish and I believe they will be content to let the

men act on their behalf.[11]

The women of this group do, in fact, participate in the private Śrīvidyā rituals conducted in their homes but not as full initiates. Sometimes singing songs or reciting LSN, the women with whom I had contact said that their role was to cook the food for naivedya and to offer devotions rather than conduct formal pūjās; they elicited no interest in having a primary role in the rituals such as śrīcakra puja. Gender roles, whether they be willfully accepted or imposed by societal pressures and caste expectations, are considered within this Mandali a cornerstone to the stability of family structure. This feeling obviously carries into the interpretation of Śrividya. The young women in the families of the group's senior initiates took no interest in the complex ritual aspects of the tradition, aspects that they identified openly as male responsibilities. Some expressed deep dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their gender roles (as one woman said about being secluded during the first three days of the menstrual cycle) but they continued to follow these conventions without open opposition. The degree to which the women of the Mandali feel oppressed by their condition is left almost entirely private. But none felt that their family's involvement in Śrīvidyā limited or contributed to a feeling of being subordinate to men. As "Naṭarāja"'s wife said:

> I have no interest in Śrīvidyā's rituals other than to participate by singing or reciting *Lalitāsahasranāma*. I have my duties such as preparing the food for *naivedya* and in the early morning I do a little meditation the way my husband has taught me. I feel that this is enough. Śrīvidyā teaches us all as Brahmins that we are not special just because we are Brahmins. Any good person is worth a hundred of the kind of Brahmins we find today.[12]

The Brahmin members of "Guru" Mandali are in many respects more liberal than others in their social community, a condition they attribute to being Śrīvidyā adepts. Members express some reluctance to use the term "Tantra" because of its colloquial connotations but attitudes towards particular texts are governed more by content than ideology. The Mandali reads selectively and accepts those portions of works that meet its standards. Offensive concepts (i.e., strict Kaula concepts such as the *pañcamakāras*, etc.) or views inconsistent with their own views are censured and "appropriate" portions retained. "Guru" Mandali "sanitizes" the Kaula Tantras to meet its ideological standards but as "Naṭarāja" put it, "...even a work such as *Kulārṇava Tantra* which has many offensive elements, such as the *pañcamakāras*, contains many beautiful and useful verses."[13] Like the "Siddha" Mandali, "Guru" Mandali believes many of the passages or ideas deemed offensive are interpolations into scripture or are simply the work of "Tantrics" who confused and disrupted Śrīvidyā's "pure" development.

Mandali members grapple with the acceptability of ritual substitutes for the pañcamakāras but none would ever contemplate literal use. On one occasion a member of the group presented another with a silver spoon in the shape of a fish, intended as a symbolic substitute for the ritual ingestion of fish (i.e., the matsyamakāra). The object sits idly and may never be used because as the adept explained, "...I accepted it because I did not wish to offend my friend but I will not use it because I cannot condone even the suggestion of the pañcamakāras in my ritual actions."[14] "Naṭarāja" further explained his own attitude towards the pañcamakāras:

> We cannot accept the use of pañcamakāras and do not believe that this is the higher way. If you read carefully in the Tantras you find that pañcamakāras are prescribed to induce a certain kind of effect that is then supposed to linger on afterwards. It is the feeling of bliss (ānanda) that is supposed to be the aim and things such as wine or illicit sex are meant to simulate this eternal, unchanging bliss. But we believe that these feelings can be achieved without pañcamakāras. What is the use of them if they are not necessary for what it is they are prescribed for? If you can achieve the result without them then that is the goal; then you will not have to spend any effort to renounce them when you do have the blissful experience. Such things will only be abused and even a great yogi should not perform these rites. What kind of example is he for others even if he does it in private? We do not reject the Tantras but we do reject many of the Tantric elements that have no place in a "pure" vidyā such as Śrīvidyā.[15]

Like other groups, the adepts of "Guru" Mandali perform the occasional rites of Śrīvidyā, such as the full <u>srīcakra pūjā</u>, at least once a month, invariably on the full moon day. One adept explained the pattern of his worship:

> I do the <u>śrīcakra pūjā</u> on the prescribed days, the full moon and the first day of the [Tamil] month. Other than that I do the full <u>pūjā</u> only when it is convenient and I can devote myself completely to it. Each day I do a shortened version of the <u>pūjā</u> that takes only about thirty minutes. Most of this time is devoted to silent repetition of the <u>mūlamantra</u>.[16]

The actual amount of ritual performance in each adept's spiritual discipline is left in large measure to individual discretion and sometimes is specifically directed by a lineage guru. At the very least adepts perform a morning period of meditation and a brief ritual devotion. The most common practice is the recitation of the so-called <u>khaḍgamālā</u> or "garland of the sword". This short litany lists the presiding deities of the <u>śrīcakra</u> following the dissolution method (<u>samhārakrama</u>) and is intended to abbreviate the full <u>śrīcakra pūjā</u> in both form and content. As one adept put it:

> The <u>khaḍgamālā</u> is an internal sacrifice (<u>antaryāga</u>) that can substitute for an external <u>śrīcakra pūjā</u>. It is a convenient summary of the longer <u>pūjā</u> but can have equal effect if performed with the proper contemplative awareness (<u>bhāvanā</u>).[17]

Following the <u>khaḍgamālā</u> a brief ritual purification

(i.e., bhutasuddhi) is performed and afterwards the silent repetition (japa) of the śrīvidyā. This pattern of practice (with some variation in length and content such as the inclusion of other mantras or a brief nyāsa) is common to the majority of Śrīvidyā lineages and cuts across ideological lines.

The khaḍghamāla's origins remain obscure and its practice is without early textual and historical references. Its popularity is undoubtedly a result of its being an evocative yet concise rehearsal of the basic components of the longer pūjā. It appeals especially to those lineages in which ritual is subordinated to meditative practice. While all adepts seem to place a greater theoretical emphasis on internalization of the ritual (antaryāga), and thus on strict meditation, rather than on the external form of the ritual itself (bahiryāga), in practice there is an observable split between different groups and individuals. Some place a greater emphasis on expanding ritual in order to prolong meditation and the activity of ritual involvement itself (such as the "Gāyatrī" Mandali; others reduce the amount of formal ritual practice in order to concentrate purely on contemplation (bhāvanā). Certain members of "Guru" Mandali, for example, deliberately reduce the amount of ritual activity in the private setting in order to maximize the amount of time spent in silent meditation.

Other "Guru" Mandali members, in a way similar to the adepts of the "Gāyatrī" and other Mandalis, elongate both ritual and meditative exercises.

It is not surprising that the "Guru" Mandali has adopted the khaḍgamālā as their most common form of daily worship; it provides enough suggestive material to bring to mind the entire navāvaraṇa śrīcakra pūjā and yet eliminates external ritual elements such as vessels (pātra) and offerings (upācāra). As "Naṭarāja" notes, the entire ritual process is made a mental act; this is the true intent, he asserts, of internal sacrifice (antaryāga). He continues:

> Our aim is to use the ritual for its maximum benefit and then to eliminate it gradually. But we do not suggest that the ritual ever be entirely disposed of as some of the Samayācārins say [cf., Lakṣmīdhara]. This would not be recommended for two reasons: first, it would set a bad example for those who are still very much in need of the ritual discipline. The ritual is designed to guide the aspirant along the spiritual path: it is very deliberate in its method. An adept who believes that he personally no longer needs the ritual does a disservice to the tradition by confusing lesser aspirants who may come to know that he has abandoned the ritual. This leads to the second point: even the most accomplished Śrīvidyā adept is always in danger of losing his grip on the enormous power he has learned. By giving up the ritual one loses the strict personal discipline that was the major reason for the accomplishment in the first place. One can easy fall prey to laziness or even cause oneself severe injury by thinking that the ritual no longer is necessary. The spiritual ladder is very easy to climb, any Śrīvidyā initiate should be able to make fast progress provided he is well-instructed, but this ladder is also very unsteady unless there is a very strict discipline. This means that the ritual aspect should never be entirely abandoned,

> as the Samayācarins say, but that it should not be unnecessarily prolonged as some would like it. This makes it only ritual and not [real] meditation.[18]

Other Mandali members and lineages, such as "Gāyatrī" Mandali who set aside more time for formal ritual performances on a daily basis, do not frequently practice the khaḍgamālā and strongly disagree with "Naṭarāja's" assessment. To them the formal śrīcakra pūjā is the centerpiece of the spiritual discipline and its expansion by song, ritual elaboration (such as increasing the number of vessels, i.e., the pātrasādhana) and meditative periods is the ideal form of generating a more concentrated spiritual discipline. By increasing the external forms of worship (bahiryāga), these adepts believe, they naturally increase the amount of internalization (antaryāga) and mediation (bhāvanā). As an exponent of the ritualist orientation remarked:

> I daily perform the [śrīcakra] pūjā in a most elaborate form, beginning at three-thirty in the morning and continuing to nine or ten [in the morning]. My wife will spend the whole time preparing the upacāras and the naivedya [as offerings]. Nothing can disturb me during this time, and when it is over I feel as if it [i.e., the pūjā] is with me the rest of the day. The goddess is present in every thing that is said or done and the pūjā becomes the centerpiece of our family's life.[19]

When I later questioned this adept about his deep emotional expressions during the pūjā---he actually wept during the invocation of the goddess on the śrīcakra---he responded:

> I am overwhelmed with the beauty and the power of the pūjā and with the grace of Devī. I feel so involved with these events that it is no longer a [mere] ritual [action] but a direct experience of the Divine.

These emotional outbursts were privately criticized by other Mandali members who view them as inappropriate to the tradition's philosophical and practical ideals. One adept remarked:

> Though we do not doubt his sincerity we believe these [outbursts] are not proper to a disciplined sādhana. It is an indication that the adept has far to go before he will realize his blissful identity with the Absolute. This kind of emotion is appropriate for an ordinary bhākta but not for a person of knowledge (jñānī).[20]

In "Guru" Mandali the majority of initiates receive only limited ritual instruction which is gradually increased if deemed appropriate to the individual or, as "Naṭarāja" remarked, to "insure that the knowledge of the tradition continues." Some adepts, it would appear, are instructed in elaborate ritual forms not for the sake of personal practice but rather to insure the ritual's preservation.

In the majority of other Śrīvidyā lineages, however, ritual performances become increasingly elaborate as

initiates gain greater expertise at both theological and practical levels. Consequently, one finds less senior members of the "Guru" Mandali performing more ritual than their bona fide teachers whereas just the opposite is the case in the majority of other lineages. Ritual and mantric expertise has led the majority of south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts with whom I had contact to believe, despite professions by both Kaulas and Samayins of the superiority of "purely internal worship", to more and more elaborate forms of external ritual performance.

There are at least three senior members of the "Guru" Mandali, all Brahmins, who act as gurus---a privilege tacitly bestowed on them by virtue of their seniority and experience. Initiation is formal but does not even remotely approximate the elaborate descriptions given in classic sources such as PKS or VT. The ritual prescriptions of "classic" initiation, such as it is described by Jan Hoens in Hindu Tantrism, appear to have no parallel among modern adepts and lineages.

In one case of initiation into the śrīvidyā, the senior adept after a period of several months of daily instruction chose an auspicious day (astrologically determined) and brought the aspirant before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti (that is, Śiva as Guru) in the Mīnākṣī temple of Madurai. After a

brief period of meditation preceded by a ritual purification (bhūtaśuddhi), the guru simply whispered the śrīvidyā mantra into the ear of the new initiate. In the weeks that followed the new initiate was given a two-dimensional bhūprastāra śrīcakra engraved on a plate of five metals along with instruction in the performance of the pūjā following the Mandali's paddhati. A senior member of the group explained the initiation and several other interpretive issues within the lineage:

> We no longer follow the elaborate specifications of the Tantras and other sources. We have abbreviated the ritual but retain all the essential points. Instead we give a long period of instruction. During this time we discuss the meaning of the three aspects of the goddess; her image, her mantra and the śrīcakra. We teach mainly through the Lalitāsahasranāma and then from our own paddhati. This gives us all the textual sources necessary at this level. Before proceeding further with the giving of the mantra I ask the permission of my own teacher [who is actually no longer living]. Then to honor my teacher and to show the importance of the guru's words and power, we come here [before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti] in order to be in the presence of the Śrīguru. But before we teach the mūlamantra many aspects of its meaning are discussed and its relationship to other mantras and devatās. For example, we must first give initiation into the mūlamantra of Gaṇapati, because without this no further progress can be made. So this too must be explained. Only then do we give the śrīvidyā. In our lineage there is only kādi pañcadaśākṣarī. We are aware of the ṣoḍaśī and some of us have initiation into this [in the mahāṣoḍaśī form] but we do not teach this for two reasons. The first is that we do not believe that this is the original form of the śrīvidyā, how could it be when there is so much difficulty with its form? It is not actually sixteen syllables. [See Part One on the śrīvidyā] And there is also the laghu

> [i.e., the abbreviated or "light"] form. But also it is usually considered only to be a mantra purely for liberation and without both the material and spiritual dimensions of the pañcadaśī. This is why it is usually reserved for sannyasins according to our tradition, but even this is not encouraged. Why should a man have to renounce the world to become unattached? The saffron robe is always worn over the heart, none of the sādhus you see know the true meaning of non-attachment. But the mantra in the pañcadaśī kādi form meets all the ritual requirements and fits perfectly into the patterns of the pūjā. Have you ever seen a paddhati for hādividyā? I have not but if you know the pūjā and the form of the hādividyā you would see immediately that its number of syllables will cause some modification in the ritual---the number of triangles and other details will not match perfectly. Therefore it is our belief that kādi is the original mantra and that it is the most powerful. We give the initiation in this way so that it will best suit the needs of both teacher and student. A long ritual is not practical, and whom does it benefit? 21

The interpretation giving preference to the kādi pañcadaśī śrīvidyā, one should note is made purely on theological rather than historical grounds. It is the apparent desire for theoretical and ritual consistency that has shaped this lineage's interpretations. Occasionally aspirants within the "Guru" Mandali are given the so-called Bālā mantra (i.e., the mūlamantra of Bālātripurasundarī) as the final stage in initiation but more commonly the śrīvidyā is given as the culmination of several months of minor initiations into "lesser" mantras (which may or may not include initiation into Bālā but always includes the mūlamantra of Gaṇapati).

The three senior teachers of the group all expressed a similar notion, namely, that the full extent of each aspirant's qualification (adhikāra) was known from the very beginning of the process of instruction. Teachings are augmented and expanded, as is ritual, but rarely it seems do students obtain precisely what they themselves consider their due unless the guru consents. For example, one adept initiated into the śrīvidyā but lacking detailed instruction in the śrīcakra ritual expressed his own disappointment but was resolved to "what ever the guru thinks is best for me. I would like to learn a more elaborate form of the pūjā but it is the short form that I do now which my guru has decided suits me."[22]

As in other lineages, it is the mantra initiation which specifically entitles the aspirant to some form of ritual worship but not necessarily the full form of śrīcakra pūjā. In some cases the level of instruction does not proceed any further than mantra initiation and an abbreviated form of ritual in which contemplative worship is performed. While in theory all Śrīvidyā adepts perform some kind of śrīcakra worship, in practice this worship is more restricted. According to "Naṭarāja" it is a matter of qualification (adhikāra):

> Some persons are neither suited for the ritual or actually qualified to have the śrīcakra as part of their worship. We believe that when Devī is temporarily invoked onto the cakra it is

> instilled with her power. This is then taken back into the adept's body at the conclusion of the pūjā. These are very familiar parts of the ritual that can be found in any paddhati. But the truth is that even after this has taken place [or, for that matter, before] the śrīcakra is not an ordinary object. We do not encourage anyone to possess it, especially if it is in its metal form. You will notice also that few of us [i.e., with the lineage] keep the [three-dimensional] meru form [of the śrīcakra]. This is usually reserved for temples or at least is not ordinarily used in the temporary invocation of Śakti---it requires more ritual attention and should have the permanent presence invoked. But some upāsakas should not keep a śrīcakra even if they do regular worship (upāsana) on the mantra. They may think of the śrīcakra while doing their meditation but may not be considered qualified for its actual worship (pūjā). This is determined solely by the guru and is for the good of the student. Later on someone may be given the śrīcakra but only rarely does one receive the cakra and the mantra at the same time. Usually there is some time between the two initiations though, for us, there is no more strict formality for giving a śrīcakra to a student who already possesses the mantra. We choose an auspicious day [astrologically] and present it at the time of pūjā, but there is no further ritual initiation.[23]

Other lineages, while maintaining the general pattern in initiation of 'mantra first, cakra later', invariably present a śrīcakra to initiates whether or not they are instructed in an elaborate form of ritual worship. There is certainly an implied hierarchy in this initiation process determined largely by seniority and tenure but not necessarily linked to a more thorough knowledge of external ritual. "Guru" Mandali offers an important exception to what would otherwise appear as a hierarchy within lineages

based upon ritual expertise. As we have noted, several senior members of "Guru" Mandali actually perform <u>less</u> ritual than their students.

But one cannot undervalue the increasing historical importance of ritual expertise and its role within most lineages as an indication of spiritual advancement. Bhāskararāya, esteemed primarily for his interpretive abilities regarding the mantra and cakra, is no less revered as a master of the ritual process. Contemporary lineages by and large accept ritual sophistication as an implicit indication of spiritual power; however, if another group or individual <u>appears</u> to emphasize ritual over contemplative activities they are likely to be criticized as lacking sufficient focus on <u>antaryāga</u>. These attitudes are comparable to those expressed concerning the study of traditional texts and concepts: adepts are quick to protect their close colleagues by emphasizing the "practical" dimensions of studies but are skeptical of others who may be straying into "fruitless" intellectual speculation. These perspectives, in one way, reflect the deeply private orientation of lineages---opinions concerning other adepts are sometimes founded only on hearsay or appearances simply because tradition does not encourage activity as a "community" of faith.

In comparison, however, Śrīvidyā displays far more interest in publicly accessible activities than perhaps any other Śākta Tantric sect. It seems ironic that contemporary adepts disclaiming interest in matters other than those within their own lineage are nonetheless often willing to bring the lineage into public view. They are certainly not immune to public perception and remain especially sensitive to caste community responses.

The Tantric emphasis on "privacy" does not mean that individuals and even semi-private groups suspend judgments regarding either their own "correct" interpretations of the tradition or the "misinterpretations" of others. The sense of "community" outside the parameters of the lineage is extremely limited and individual adepts or lineages rarely seek "outside" contacts. This appears to reflect a broader situation among Hindus, not merely Tantrics: Saiva Hindu worship, even in public forums such as temples, emphasizes individual encounter and participation within the local (caste) community rather than as a community acting as a self conscious unit. Śrīvidyā liturgies, however they may have an impact on others, are designed specially for the spiritual needs of the individual adept. Though *paddhatis* may serve as the liturgy of a group, they are not intended to be group liturgies.

Within Tantrism the emphasis on individual effort in spiritual discipline contributes to the tightly knit structure of lineages and the apparent lack of a larger "community" feeling. This has not eliminated a sense of "tradition", inasmuch as this entails continuity with the past, though individual adepts may not feel an obligation to justify the views of historical figures, texts or practices. While gurus and deities may be propitiated to intercede for the welfare of an individual, a specific group or even the whole universe, material prosperity and liberation are individually achieved by an adept's personal efforts.

Privacy remains an important feature within Śrīvidyā despite the appearance of semi-private organizations and the impact of the tradition and adepts on popular Hindu faith: the vast majority of adepts belong to lineages with no public activities and maintain strict privacy in practice. As one adept of the "Guru" Mandali said:

> Another Śrīvidyā adept could be living across the street and you would not know unless you asked. There is a reluctance, I think, not only because it is personal but because there is so great a possibility of being misunderstood. There is simply no reason to advertize the tradition because those who are meant to learn it will eventually come to it, if not in this life then in some other.[24]

The feelings of predetermined destiny alluded to in this quotation also emerge in other contexts, such as the

feeling of being part of a privileged, spiritual elite. In this way Śrīvidyā is representative of a prevailing attitude within Tantrism. Accompanying the values of secrecy and empowerment through selective initiation is the feeling that admission to Śrīvidyā specifically indicates that the individual has reached the highest rung on the karmic ladder. (A position, one might add, that is not uncommon to many Hindu sects.) While birth in a particular caste (in some lineages) may not be the determining criterion for admission, adepts often convey the impression that they feel "born" for this faith. Adepts frequently cite Śrīvidyā sources to maintain that initiation into the mantra and secrets of the sect indicates an individual has reached the last birth in the karmic cycle.[25]

Scriptural sources, however, are not the only authority for this statement since adepts consider their teachers to be "perfectly realized" and hence no longer subject to transmigration (saṃsāra). This belief would, at one level, appear to undermine the strong emphasis given to individual effort as a necessary element for the successful culmination of the spiritual discipline. If the assurance of liberation comes at the point of initiation then why would a rigorous life of disciplined practice be necessary? While this assurance of prosperity and final liberation is taken seriously among contemporary adepts, in practice it has led

to differing interpretations. For some this ultimate guarantee that the spiritual discipline will confer its benefits (provided one lives up to the rigors of sādhana) only confirms feelings of superiority. There is no dearth of pride, however undeserved it may actually be, among a substantial number of adepts. For others there remains a powerful theological check: until that realization is fulfilled, God, as a real and discriminating superior Consciousness, plays a prominent role in determining the outcome of an adept's discipline. Viewed in another way, the necessity of continued discipline is part of the initiation process itself. Adepts are usually not so arrogant as to believe that the formal beginning of spiritual discipline, initiation, is also its culmination.

The value of humility, however often reiterated and seemingly lacking among some contemporary adepts, nevertheless has an important function in the way adepts think about themselves and others. It is, for example, quite acceptable to belief that another has attained the goal of liberation while yet living (jīvanmukti) but it would be considered extremely inappropriate to make this claim for oneself. As one adept put it in a familiar turn of the phrase, "those who say [they are liberated] do not know [i.e., have obtained liberating knowledge (jñāna)] and those who know do not say."

Disciples always maintain that their own gurus have reached the liberative goal even if appearances do not seem to confirm the impression. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, makes "guarantees" of spiritual and material prosperity that don't always reflect actual circumstances. One adept, for example, spoke with obvious passion about how his own teacher had not only died in poverty but from cancer.[26] These factors, however, in no way lessened his conviction in the guru's achievement or in the efficacy of the tradition's claims to prosperity. The guru's fate was "karma" and provided a painful but purposeful example, the adept said, since the guru had died "without showing any indication of suffering."

The tradition's claims of spiritual achievement and material prosperity have not it seems eliminated the very real suffering of adepts, a situation, we can be certain, not without historical precedents. But it is no less obvious that Śrīvidyā has provided spiritual comfort for its faithful adherents. Though it is a karmic destiny to have been blessed to receive a teaching that guarantees liberation in this birth, it may be the result of other karmic outflows that determine other less salutary effects. There is a fine line, it would seem, between the claims the tradition makes concerning mastery over the human situation and the degree to which the adept feels bound in the karmic

cycles of existence.

Some members of the "Guru" Mandali also serve as the traditional, hereditary temple priests at two prominent Śiva temples in central Śrī Laṅka. These Tamil families control the institutions as a private trust and maintain all the customs of Tamil smārta Brahmins. Only immediate members of the extended patrilineal family are entitled to be priests but it is clear that the lineage views the activities of the temples as almost an extension of their individual discipline and lineage activities. Rites and activities are nearly identical at both sites and thus can be discussed as a single example.

Śrīvidyā worship is a common feature of the temples' activities though these are not the exclusive forms of worship. Before the image of the goddess within the inner sanctum is placed a three-dimensional meru form of the śrīcakra in which the presence of the deity is permanently invoked. Though Śiva is technically the focus of temple rites, it is Śakti who receives the lion's share of attention both from priests and devotees. A complete śrīcakra pūjā is performed daily though access to the sanctum is restricted to the hereditary priests. As a matter of course all male members of the priestly families

are initiated into both the *śrīvidyā* and the intricacies of the ritual. Ritual duties are delegated according to a calendrical pattern with senior members taking charge during festival times. To describe all the rites and activities surrounding the *śrīcakra* at just one of the temples would require more space than the present investigation permits. The rituals discussed here focus on observations made during one important ritual period, the autumn festival of the nine nights (*śāradanavarātri*).

The *navarātri* or "nine nights" festivals, especially the one occuring in the autumn rather than spring (*vasanta*) season, are the most important annual ritual periods for Srividya tradition. It is marked by worship of the goddess in nine aspects each a form of the three consorts of the *trimūrti*, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and is common to all Śaiva temples. While it is clear that *navarātri* is not a Srīvidyā festival *per se*, it an important annual Śākta festival throughout most of India. In Bengal the center of ritual attention are the various aspects of Kālī but in the south, especially in Tamil Nāḍu, the emphasis lies on Śākti's beneficent or *saumya* aspects. This regional emphasis on the beneficent Śakti has obvious implications for Śrīvidyā worshippers in the south: it is the most auspicious and ritually significant period of the entire year. It is quite common, for example, for Śrīvidyā adepts to perform the full

śrīcakra pūjā everyday (or night) for the nine nights and to augment this with homas and other extended forms of worship (such as prolonged periods of recitation of LSN or other stotras and stavas).

At Śaiva temples, and specifically at the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Śrī Laṅka, presided over by priests belonging to "Guru" Mandali, an everyday worship of the śrīcakra during the navarātri festival serves as the central focus of ritual activities and popular worship. It should be emphasized that there are no textual precedents for śrīcakra worship or any of the common forms of Śrīvidyā worship (such as the recital of LSN, LTS or SL, or Śrīvidya homas, etc.) in classical sources, such as Śaiva Āgamas, that normally direct the course of a temple's ritual activities. As Fuller has shown in his study of the priests of the Mīnākṣī temple of Madurai the authoritative and theoretical prescriptions of the Āgamas are not always the most reliable guide to the performance of actual temple rites.[27] The priests of Muneśvaram, however, acknowledge openly that the worship conducted within the temple to the śrīcakra has no parallel elsewhere, whether it be the heightened ritual activity of the festival time or the daily practice. They have made what is essentially a private, family decision to introduce worship that is otherwise not prescribed, that is, to bring a private form of Tantrism

into the public setting of a temple.

Predictably, the priests of Muneśvaram are reticent to call their worship Tantric or to refer to Śrīvidyā as a sect of Śākta Tantrism. The term carries unwanted connotations that do not apply to the conservative Brahmin customs of the group. Most initiated male family members do not study Śrīvidyā sources other than as ritual guides and hence remain aloof from the tradition's theological controversies and interpretations. But none would fail to assert Śrīvidyā as completely in consonance with the norms of established orthodoxy.

Only one member of the family can be considered an intellectual concerned with theology and historical tradition. He explains the position of the family and temple:

> We introduced the worship of the Devī in the form of the śrīcakra into our temples so that everyone might benefit from it. We consider it unique but since it follows all the orthodox customs there can be no objection. What goes on in the temple is completely under our control. All the boys in the family who stay to become priests receive initiation into Śrīvidyā but only a few of us maintain a private ritual practice outside the formal worship inside. The difference between what I do privately and what is done within the temple is only a matter of degree. Outside the temple I cannot approach the elaborate abhiśeka [ritual bathing of the image] or the number of offerings (upācāra). But the few of us who keep an outside practice also spend much time in meditation on the mantra which is not done by all who are qualified to do the ritual. To be a priest of the temple we consider a hereditary right only and with this comes the right to

> Śrīvidyā, but not all of the priests would otherwise be Śrīvidyā upāsakas. And there are many Śrīvidyā upāsakas even within our own lineage who are not priests of the temple nor qualified to be. To be born into this kind of temple worship is a great honor but those who are not and yet are Śrīvidyā upāsakas are sometimes much more sincere in their private practice.
>
> We believe that Śrīvidyā can be for everyone and so the śrīcakra pūjā is performed outside the sanctum on the festival days for anyone to see. Many Buddhists and non-Hindus come to the temple during this time to see the pūjā and to gain the blessings of Devī. It is appropriate to do this worship because it [i.e., the śrīcakra] is the highest form of the goddess and the ritual is strictly done by initiated priests.[28]

During the śārada navarātri the Muneśvaram temple draws sizable crowds considering its location in an area dominated by Singhala-speaking Buddhists. Several devotees indicated that they were Buddhists who come each year to partake in the prasāda of the festival worship. The śrīcakra is worshipped twice daily in "special" rites that augment the usual forms of daily ritual. Placed on a raised platform, the śrīcakra is plainly visible and the designated head priest for the occasion supervises the activities of others.

The primary ritual, the śrīcakra navāvaraṇa pūjā, is itself remarkable only for its precision and elaborate detail, otherwise its performance here is not unusual. It proceeds much the same way as the private worship of the "Guru" Mandali without any suggestion of Kaula influence even in the form of symbolic substitutes (such as the "fish

spoon" used to indicate the _matsya_ _makāra_). Were it not for its being a public display of the usually private performance of _śrīcakra_ _pūjā_ there would be little reason for the ordinary person to believe that the ritual was beyond the prescriptions of ordinary temple worship.

This single example may, in fact, provide the clearest evidence for the presence of the non-sanctioned worship of the _śrīcakra_ in public forums, especially in the Śaiva temples of south India and Śrī Laṅka. While other temples in which the _śrīcakra_ is present (these are discussed separately below) have no longer maintained a living tradition that can adequately account for its presence, these Śrī Laṅka-based temples testify to the influence of priestly management on the traditions of worship.

The strong influence of Brahmin-dominated (or exclusively Brahmin) lineages on Śrīvidyā is apparent from the period of its incipient written history, as is the movement towards "sanitizing" Kaula influences. Thus it appears likely that the same groups of Brahmins who have acted as priests and leaders of the religious communities are responsible for the introduction of the essentially private Śrīvidyā worship in the public temples. The reasons for this seem twofold: first is the theological conviction that this worship is "superior" not only in content but in form, that the _śrīcakra_ is the "highest form" of the goddess

and to worship her in this way is only appropriate. Worshipping the highest and obviously less anthropomorphic aspect would confer a certain prestige on the temple itself. Secondly there is the increasing influence of traditional orthodoxy on the private forms of Śrīvidyā worship. With professional and personal religious endeavors intertwined, high caste adepts had little recourse but to make Śrīvidyā a part of their public lives. The inclusion of Śrīvidyā in temples brought it clearly within the folds of traditional orthodoxy and sometimes served as an alternative to private performance: what is done for one's own "benefit" privately can be done openly for the sake of all. In the "sanitized" environment of public temple worship, Brahmin votaries of the tradition could distinguish their practices and interpretations from "Tantrics". One can observe a parallel in textual sources, such as the SL, which give no outward appearance of Tantric influences and, it seems, quite deliberately avoid even the term Tantra. Some historical adepts, such as Lakṣmīdhara, are said to have resisted efforts to bring private and secret practices of Śrīvidyā into public view but in instances in which Brahmin adepts exercised a particularly strong influence on local temple worship it would appear only natural to introduce ritual even when theological interpretations remain private. The introduction of Śrīvidyā into these "unsanctioned" contexts

must be the result of its increasing popularity among a significant faction of Brahmins empowered to shape and determine temple traditions.

The "Guru" Mandali priests have not altered their standards of qualification (adhikāra) other than extending the hereditary right of the temple priest to an initiation into Śrīvidyā; an initiation that invariably originated in the private traditions of the sect. One priest noted that initiation remains private though instruction in the ritual is, properly speaking, the result of "on the job training". Whether the priests maintain a private form of practice is a completely personal decision. This partially private, partially public structure also seems characteristic of the historical situation surrounding the introduction of Śrīvidyā worship into temples: the passionate and personal conviction of those originally responsible for initiating the worship within the temple is not necessarily passed on to heirs with a "birthright" to initiation. This would also help to explain the vitality of Śrīvidyā today as a private tradition and its obscure and sometimes unaccounted for presence in temples in which initiation has not been "earned" by qualification. In other instances within temples, elements of Śrīvidyā, such as the śrīcakra, are present but traditions of worship, maintained and passed in private forms of instruction, have either been lost or are

in an obviously deteriorated condition.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 1: "Murugan"

"Murugan" is a non-Brahmin Śrīvidyā initiate belonging to the <u>viśvakarman</u> or "carpenter's caste". He has earned his reputation as an adept primarily for his abilities to manufacture <u>śrīcakras</u> and as the trustee of a foundation devoted to religious ecumenicalism. "Murugan" maintains that Śrīvidyā is the "original" form of religious spirituality and that it offers an alternative to all "narrow" affiliations. While he is himself openly Śākta, "Murugan" maintains that Śrīvidyā is not strictly a form of Śākta Tantrism nor even "Hindu" since it transcends any and all sectarianism. He has little interest in the intellectual disputes within the tradition though he has a lucid grasp of its ritual intricacies and the contents of major textual sources.

"Murugan" was one of many adepts who claimed a close personal connection with the Śaṅkara tradition in Kāñcipuram and, in accordance with Brahmin-influenced conservatism, maintained that Śrīvidyā contained no "objectionable", i.e., Kaula elements. Though a non-Brahmin by birth, "Murugan" had effectively conformed to the external forms of Brahmin

orthodoxy in order to gain initial access to the worship traditions of that community; he has, for example, become a vegetarian teetotaler which is, at least theoretically, a customary requirement of south Indian Brahminism.

"Murugan's" own initiation took place some twenty years ago, at which time he committed himself to a project that includes the construction of a "temple for all faiths". The focus of worship within this temple is the śrīcakra and on the temple grounds is an "Institute" for the study of "spiritual issues". The project has attracted a great deal of interest and financial resources and is presently raising funds by subscription. He has financed these efforts not only by donation but through his skill as an artisan of images, particularly the śrīcakra. These icons he sells in a private shop and supplies to individuals and institutions on order. He spoke proudly of the Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcipuram's involvement in the instillation of a śrīcakra in a temple near Madras. The Śaṅkarācārya apparently visited the scene and "conferred his blessings on this and the other projects", including the building of his Śrī Meru Foundation "devoted to the study of spiritual life".

Privately "Murugan" mentioned that his ritual involvement in śrīcakra worship was limited; he concentrated, he said, on silent repetition of the mantra. This practice of minimal ritual involvement is common to a

very substantial number of initiates whose initiation appears to have been confined to the mantra. His private discipline, he said, did not directly involve the work of the Foundation he has established to study "spirituality". He specifically mentioned that Śrīvidyā, though only one aspect of study within the Institute, would be the central form of worship. Since Śrīvidyā was the "ancient Vedic religion" it necessarily was, in "Murugan's" assessment, the "original" faith belonging to all humankind.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 2: "Sītā"

"Sītā" is an elderly Tamil smārta Brahmin woman who has spent most of her married life in north India. She belongs to no particular Mandali and her association with Śrīvidyā comes through a variety of sources. This situation, however lacking in conformity with the strict sense of lineage presented in textual sources, is not uncommon. Many individual adepts have gained initiation and ritual instructions in a piecemeal fashion over a period of years.

Though her father was a Śrīvidyā adept versed in text and ritual, "Sītā" received her first initiation, into the kādi form of the pañcadaśī śrīvidyā in 1973, from Svarūpānandasarasvatī, the present pīṭhācārya of the Śaṅkara

maṭha in Dwaraka, Gujarat. The Swami gave no extensive ritual instructions and placed no restrictions on the use or repetition of the mantra. She recalls having what she described as a "mystical experience" in the presence of the Swami:

> I went to Rāñchi for the duśera festival to see the Swamiji. He invited me in to sit with him for pūjā, it was a sahasranāma pūjā [i.e., a ritual recital of the LSN]. During the recital of the sahasranāma I felt a powerful feeling in my spine that I later identified as the kuṇḍalinī [i.e., the esoteric yogic power identified with Śakti]. After the ritual (pūjā) the Swami said to perform the repetition (japa) of the mantra regularly and in seven years the complete sādhana including śrīcakra pūjā and nyāsa (i.e., the process of identifying sounds with the body and the śrīcakra) would come to me. He didn't say how this would happen but seven years later in Bombay I met another guru of Śrīvidyā. He initiated me into the mahāṣoḍaśī [śrīvidyā] mantra, taught me the śrīcakra pūjā and gave me a paddhati to follow. Sometime later in Madras he explained the whole navāvaraṇa pūjā. The guru is a Gujurati Brahmin though he regularly uses wine in his ritual. He too belongs to no organized Mandali but comes from a distinguished line of teachers. He also makes śrīcakras of gold and of glass [i.e., the so-called sphaṭika form] but gives them only to initiates who ask for them. But regularly I do the LSN and only śrīcakra pūjā on the special days [viz., the full moon and first day of the Tamil month]. In south India there is too much concern for ritual and orthodoxy while in north India there is more inner sincerity. I do not use wine in the ritual but I see it as a higher qualification.[29]

The śrīcakra that "Sītā" had in her possession was not only in the meru or kailāsa form, as she called it, but was constructed over a two-dimensional bhūprastāra śrīcakra.

This, she explained, followed the instructions she received from her second guru who had received them in a dream. The particular detail of the śrīcakra's construction she discovered only after her father had dropped the cakra accidentally and it had broken into two pieces. Prior to this she had not been told of the peculiar nature of the cakra or of the instructions her guru later said had come in a dream. Following a ritual questioning in which a Keralite Namboodri Brahmin was asked what should be done with the cakra, now actually two śrīcakras, she received a sanction to perform the pūjā to both "halves".

> When I saw the two pieces of the cakra I realized that this signified the presence of both Śiva and Śakti. I knew something more would come to me in time.[30]

When the Śaṅkarācārya came to know of her further initiation some years later he augmented her ritual practice by giving her a small Śiva liṅga and explained the ritual significance of the identification of sounds with cakra and body, i.e., nyāsa.

The Śaṅkarācārya, she went on to explain, included no makāras in his own practice and this seemed to her perfectly appropriate for the Śāṅkara tradition. However, she observed in her own observation that nearly all north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts use wine in their śrīcakra rituals though they prefer substitutes (pratinidhi) for other makāra

prescriptions. There is reason to believe that "Sītā's" opinion on this matter reflects the actual situation: the socially conservative southern adepts, and more especially Brahmin and Brahmin influenced adepts, cannot abide the use of "prohibited" substances; in the north the use of the makāras among Brahmins appears as a deliberate effort to assert the Tantric nature of the discipline.

"Sītā" attributed an improvement in her health and continued material good fortune to Śrīvidyā discipline saying, as nearly all adepts do, that the practice is designed to meet all human aims (puruṣārthas). But, she asserted, for Śrīvidyā adepts certain privileges and customs should be observed in order to maintain their "good standing", that is, to insure that prosperity continues. For example, she said that there should be no formal funeral rites for an adept since the discipline (sādhana) insured no future rebirth. Neither is it necessary or even desirable to go to ordinary temples so long as the śrīcakra is regularly worshipped privately in the home. Temples, she contended, were filled with "outside" influences that may obstruct progress for the adept.

While it is a common belief that Śrīvidyā initiation insures the present birth to be the last and that liberation is inevitable, "Sītā" was exceptional in her insistence on wanting no part of the customary forms of funeral rites

typical to Tamil smārtas. Her family acknowledges her wishes but it is not clear that they will abide by them. Certainly the vast majority of Brahmin south Indian adepts did not wish to break with religious and social conventions or draw attention to themselves or their family. While it is also common for Śrīvidyā adepts to be generally less interested in public temple worship (unless they are themselves associated directly with a temple) and to concentrate on private worship, few make so direct an effort to stay away from the public forms of worship as "Sītā". The vast majority of adepts, as individuals or as members of a semi-private lineage, maintain the appearances of a pious Hindu giving little or no indication that they are Śrīvidyā initiates or that they consider themselves members of a spiritual elite.

"Sītā" maintained that she had gained certain powers from her discipline, including the power to become possessed of deceased ancestors and other persons upon request, but that she had not deliberately sought such abilities. This too is not an uncommon feature among adepts though there are some who feel such activities debase and even embarrass the tradition. This latter opinion is remarkable if only because of the tradition's emphatic claims of attaining siddhis at the initial stages of practice. None of those claiming such powers assert that they have deliberately used

their Śrīvidya discipline to gain them but all attribute the ability as secondary result of the spiritual discipline. As "Sitā" explained:

> Śrīvidyā confers many abilities but none of these should be sought after. They will come naturally and by the grace of the guru.[31]

Like other adepts, "Sītā" also engages in rituals comparable to the prayogas of the SL (but not these specifically) in order to obtain certain material or spiritual results such as the alleviation of illness or the quelling of some disturbing force. These can be done, she remarked, by the adept for someone else's sake. Initiation into Śrīvidyā, however, is restricted because,

> ...the powers and abilities gained in Śrīvidyā can be used for almost any purpose including harming others or doing immoral things. It is secret because it is powerful and is itself a source of power. Without proper controls it can be misused.[32]

In other respects, she noted, the guru gave tremendous latitude in individual practice. This is not the least bit uncommon among adepts belonging to lineages lacking a structured hierarchy. Once initiated disciples may see their guru only on very rare occasions and sometimes never again. The responsibility to maintain and develop the practice of Śrīvidyā is left solely to the individual. While not in keeping with the usual sense of the closely monitored and personally directed Tantric relationship of

guru and disciple, this situation is not the least bit uncommon. In some cases further instruction or directions come in dreams or visions but it seems clear that Śrīvidyā in practice does not always conform to the picture of guru/disciple intimacy emphasized in textual sources. Disciples feel no less bonded to their teachers though their instruction may, in fact, come from a number of sources and lack any extended period with a guru.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE 3: "Śrīdhara"

"Śrīdhara" is also a Tamil smārta Brahmin living in Madras. He has earned his livlihood most of his adult life through the publication of books on Śrīvidyā and other aspects of Śaiva/Śākta religion, especially regarding practices in south India. He too attributes his success to Śrīvidyā though apparently he has not won the favor of other Madras-based groups or individuals. Members of both "Ānanda" and "Gāyatrī" Maṇḍalis were highly critical of his written efforts and questioned also his personal integrity. Writing under a pseudonym, "Śrīdhara" nevertheless publishes both his picture and address in his books and proclaiming himself an authority on Śrīvidyā and on the interpretation of Śaiva/Śākta practices and traditions. My interviews with him confirmed the impression he has left on others,

especially regarding his own inflated opinion of himself as an authority on Śrīvidyā tradition.

Despite the criticism he has received and his self proclaimed expertise, "Śrīdhara" is an interesting case study. He is a disciple of the very popular guru of "Ānanda" Mandali but has long since fell out with any of this teacher's other disciples. While he claimed that he did not himself practice the makāras he maintained that this "higher discipline" was, in fact, practiced by his own guru and continues to be found in south India. There is no corroborating evidence to this effect but the possibility is not entirely unlikely. Śrīvidyā, he said, was the secret teaching of the Vedas and he cited the Ṛg Veda passage noted by Bhāskararāya and others as evidence of the mantra's hidden form. As part of his own practice he claimed to worship a śrīcakra that is "over five hundred years old" and has been in a continuous state of worship through successive generations of initiates. This continuity in the worship of this single object brought with it many advantages, including the "residual effects of the great upāsakas who have worshipped it before."

The notion that a ritual object such as a śrīcakra is in some way comparable to a relic of a saint is not uncommon among contemporary adepts. To have access or possession of any artifact of a past great Śrīvidyā votary is considered

both a privilege and, to some extent, a responsibility. Objects such as "Śrīdhara's" <u>śrīcakra</u> are usually passed within lineages but are sometimes bestowed as gifts or given to institutions such as temples. The power of the object is both inherent and as a ritual artifact, in this case an artifact of worship in which the ritual power of past owners is believed to have accumulated in the physical form. A <u>śrīcakra</u>, for example, once worshipped possesses an intrinsic power whether or not it continues to be used and by its configuration is considered potentially powerful. Śrīvidyā sources never mention specifically ideas concerning relics or the continuity of practices involving a single <u>śrīcakra</u>. Śrīvidyā adepts, however, have clearly made the fate of such ritual objects and other possessions of a guru important elements in the continuity of lineage traditions. In material possessions, relics and other ritual objects the transmission of power is secured through an imagined or historical relationship to past sources of authority.

Śrīvidyā, "Śrīdhara" further asserted, rests on five interrelated principles: (1) guru, (2) mantra, (3) <u>pūjā</u> or ritual, (4) yoga and (5) <u>jñāna</u> or knowledge. These, according to him, are invariable factors in any Śrīvidyā practice. This summary does, in fact, approximate the

elements common in most Śrīvidyā lineages. But like so many of "Srīdhara's" discussions, his inability to elaborate on the sources of the summary indicated that his expertise was indeed not what he claimed it to be. His overall aim, "Śrīdhara" said, was public service and to "bring Srīvidyā to the world".

"Śrīdhara" is certainly not exemplary of the tradition's ideals of qualification (adhikāra) but neither is he lacking in peers. The number of individuals who seem to have gravitated to the intellectual and ritual sophistication of Śrīvidyā in order to promote their own activities---whether it be for employment or prestige within a community---is quite remarkable considering the "closed" or private orientation of the tradition and the scrupulous care taken by some adepts to limit initiation. But the appeal of Śrīvidyā at least in the past fifty years has provided the necessary impetus. Certainly the wealth of information now publicly available in the vernacular Indian languages has permanently reshaped the cast of those claiming to be initiates.

E. Remarks on the Comparison of North and South Indian Śrīvidya

Though my contact with organized groups in north India was extremely limited when compared to those in south India, I did meet a number of individual north Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. Even with Dr. Sundaramoorthy present or with a personal introduction, the majority of north Indian adepts were more reluctant to discuss the tradition openly. Several refused to discuss their own personal practice but agreed to talk openly about theories or concepts.

In general, the north Indian practitioners were far less concerned with ny public or semi-private form of involvement such as it is in south India and also less observant of conforming to the norms of conventional Brahmin orthodoxy as it is regionally interpreted in north India. Two informants, both Brahmins, openly advocated the use of the pañcamakāras and claimed that Śrīvidyā as a Tantric sādhana clearly prescribed their use in its highest forms. In effect, these north Indian adepts reflect an image that seems more in consonance with Kaula textual traditions and the illustrations of past observers such as Sir John Woodroffe. Few adepts expressed any reservation about using the term Tantra as applying to Śrīvidyā though all acknowledged "Tantrism" had suffered misunderstanding in minds of "ordinary" people.

A number of informants said that Śrīvidyā was still very actively practiced in north India, especially in Benares, in Mahārāṣṭra and Rājasthan and gave examples of common interpretations. The basic pattern of śrīcakra ritual conforms to south Indian forms with important regional differences in evidence with regard to "local customs" (deśācāra). For example, in south India customary prescriptions strictly prohibit men from wearing a shirt during any such ritual; this common practice applies universally and appears to carry over from the regional practice of removing the shirt before coming before the main image of a temple (as is still the case in Cidambaram before Naṭarāja or in Kanyakumāri before the goddess Kanyakumārī). North Indian adepts dismissed the importance of this custom, in the words of one, as the "usual preoccupation of southerners with ritual".[33]

Despite such regional distinctions, north Indian adepts performed the ritual activities common to Śrīvidyā's Sanskrit based tradition. Certain Sanskrit sources while present in the north, do not enjoy the same degree of popularity in practice. For example, the LSN's popularity as a stotra crosses regional lines though as part of the śrīcakra ritual its recitation among initiates appears more frequently in southern India. The same can be said of the mantric repetition of the Tripurā Upaniṣad.

Perhaps the most obvious regional difference between northern and southern adepts is that northern adepts are less inclined to elaborate the ritual details (such as elaborating the use of vessels, i.e., pātrasādhana) but more willing to accept scriptural prescription literally, such as including the pañcamakāras. Consequently, the north Indian adepts with whom I had contact were far less "selective" in the reading of scriptures and, in the execution of ritual, were more willing to adhere to the literal provisions of sources. Oral traditions still provide substantial input into the interpretation and content of ritual performance but written texts seem far less manipulated to suit the often unstated codes of convention that so permeate southern Brahmin culture. Written prescriptions within the classical Sanskrit texts, such as PKS and VT, have a greater direct influence on the activities of northern adepts and are frequently adopted verbatim into the ritual handbooks. On the whole it is clear that Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā tradition has not undergone the same degree of transformation in northern India as it has in the south especially with regard to the "acceptability" of theories or practices.

North Indian lineages also seem to have been less concerned with publication and semi-private organizational activities. This may be attributable to several factors in

south Indian culture, especially with regard to Tamil Brahmins. First, there is a remarkable degree of religious activity sponsored by small, local groups of Brahmins throughout Tamil Nāḍu. Having become a recognized minority politically out of favor with the forces of the Dravidian movement for at least the past fifty years, religious organizational activity remains one of the means of maintaining community identity. The majority of Brahmin-dominated (or exclusively Brahmin) Śrīvidyā lineages in south India brought their sponsored, semi-private activities to the attention of the larger Brahmin community and have frequently obtained financial and other support from Brahmin patrons. In a sense, the heightened public image of certain groups reflects the larger movement towards caste community organization and identity under the current circumstances.

Second, Tamil smārta Brahmins while not temple priests by profession (though frequently domestic priests) often have very close ties with Śaiva temples. Śrīvidyā lineages have sometimes tied themselves to a particular temple and offer their activities as a kind of extension of the public temple's duties, that is, as a result of a special theological relationship with the local deity. Such involvement would suggest not only the perception of piety (and hence a feeling of prestige) but a sense of intimacy and perhaps even influence on the deity itself in the eyes

of others. Indeed there is at least circumstantial evidence of the influence of sectarian Śrīvidyā tradition on the activities and theological associations of temples with which they have no formal relationship. The Mīṇākṣī temple in Madurai offers an interesting instance: within the temple are sold various portraits of the goddess usually purchased with the intent to display her either at home or in the work place. One such portrait (available at the temple's own shop rather than independently) places a _śrīcakra_ directly below a common anthropomorphic image of Mīṇākṣī. The connection could not be more direct though it goes largely unobserved. The goddess Mīṇākṣī's identification with Sakti in the form of the _śrīcakra_ is simply part of a local tradition with no scriptural source or oral lore offering an explanation. The influence of Śrīvidyā, however private and secretive, is evident in the sanctioned, "public" theological understanding of the goddess Mīṇākṣī. This situation reflects an influence which could have only come about through a deliberate effort to associate the cakra with the goddess, whether or not it is meant to convey, as it does to Śrīvidyā adepts, that Mīṇākṣī's "highest and most subtle form" is the _śrīcakra_. The implication is that of superiority, not only of the local aspect of deity who is considered the highest form of Śakti but of the worshippers of that form. However the link was intended, the result is

clear: the image of the famed goddess Mīṇākṣī, who is not otherwise associated with the *śrīcakra* through myth or legend, has been *publicly* associated with Śrīvidyā tradition---at least in the eyes of its adepts. The extent to which this particular identification is a direct result of the influence of *certain* Śrīvidyā adepts historically is not clear. The movement has a whole, however, has left its mark and with it another association in a public setting between initiated members of lineages and the non-initiated majority.

I would not mean to suggest that north Indian Śrīvidya lineages have had less influence on temple affairs, deliberate or otherwise, but that south Indian Hindu culture has been more focused on worship within large temples as a center of social and religious interaction. North Indian adepts do not display the same interest in identifying Lalitā with regional aspects of the goddess and consequently place less stress on temple worship and public displays of the *śricakra*. Not facing the same social pressures of identity as their southern caste peers, Śrīvidyā lineages dominated by Brahmins in north India are more restricted in access, more private in orientation and less influenced by the perception of others.

1. Madras, December, 1984.

2. This literature is usually privately published and includes advertisements from sponsors much like what is seen in a regularly published magazine. Groups do not appear to be particularly selective in their acceptance of patronage though within Brahmin dominated groups there is little effort made to solicit non-Brahmin donations.

3. These are discussed below in the section on public performances conducted by private institutions such as temples and formal organizations such as the Śaṅkara mathas.

4. It should be noted that I was not permitted to observe any of the group's worship (being not born a smārta Brahmin) and that Dr. Sundaramoorthy and I were not able to probe as deeply into the performance aspects of this group as we were in others. In fact, "Jyotiṣa" was not a little surprised to find out that I was both an initiate and something of a scholar of Śrīvidyā tradition. It was clear that he did not approve of my personal involvement.

5. The opinion of a number of adepts, including "Nataraja" of "Guru" Mandali profiled below.

6. "Jyotiṣa" of "Samaya" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

7. Certain questions remain, however, for the student of the ritual. For example, there arises a question of "placement" regarding the gurumaṇḍala in which the three generations of gurus of any lineage are honored by being identified in the space above the srīcakra's central triangle. According the Samaya version of the sricakra, this space is now occupied by the bindu. "Jyotiṣa" did not go into the details of the ritual and only said that there were no changes from the "usual" pattern. One can only interpret this to mean that the gurumaṇḍala continues to be worshipped as it is when the śrīcakra is in its "Kaula" placement.

8. A senior member of the lineage, Tiruchirappalli, January, 1985.

9. Madurai, April, 1985.

10. Madurai, April, 1985.

11. Madurai, January, 1985.

12. Madurai, April, 1985.

13. Madurai, April, 1985.

14. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

15. Madurai, April, 1985.

16. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, June, 1985.

17. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali who acts as a guru to several members, Madurai, June, 1985.

18. Madurai, April, 1985.

19. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

20. "Naṭarāja", Madurai, June, 1985.

21. Madurai, June, 1985.

22. "Guru" Mandali member, Delhi, November, 1984.

23. Madurai, June, 1985.

24. A senior member of the "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

25. Cf., Setubandha on NSA, Introductory remarks to v.1.

26. "Agastya" of "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, January, 1985.

27. See Fuller, C.F., Servants of the Goddess, The Priests of a South Indian Temple. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp.169ff.

28. From a series of interviews conducted in April and June, 1985 in Madurai.

29. From a series of interviews conducted in Madurai, June, 1985.

30. Madurai, June, 1985.

31. Madurai, June, 1985.

32. Madurai, June, 1985.

33. From an interview with a north Indian adept in Benares, September, 1985.

Part Two
The Living Śrīvidyā Tradition in south India
Chapter Three
Śrīvidyā in Saiva Temples and the Involvement of the Uninitiated

A. Introductory Remarks

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage is its development of public forms of practice involving non-initiates. As we observed in the Profiles of Maṇḍalis, Śrīvidyā has found a place in such public Hindu settings as Śaiva/Śākta temples in which the śrīcakra pūjā and other rituals are performed. Adepts are entirely responsible for the continuity of Śrīvidyā's public worship and have deliberately brought their private practices into public purview. At least three reasons for this can be surmised: (1) public worship is often an extension of private sādhana conducted by the purveyors of a particular temple's traditions and, in some cases, public involvement substitutes for private practice; (2) private, esoteric forms of worship have a powerful attraction for non-initiates attracted to Śrīvidyā's ritual sophistication and, more especially, to the extensive use of mantras and yantras. The use of such traditionally secret and "powerful" objects contributes to elevating the status of those who employ them in worship; and (3) Śrīvidyā adepts view their worship not merely as a personal form of

religious discipline but one performed for the benefit of all. Extending worship into temple settings seems appropriate since in these contexts the formal ritual allows the greatest number of passive participants and creates the impression that the performance is not merely a private affair.

However the appearance of Śrīvidyā in public settings is explained within Śrīvidyā or temple traditions, the historical situation in the majority of cases remains obscure. Temple records and written traditions are unfortunately of little help while contemporary oral traditions are largely unverifiable.

B. Śrīvidyā in Public Settings

In the south Indian setting it is clear that the introduction of Śrīvidyā rituals into temples, such as śrīcakra navāvaraṇa pūjā, into temples or an association with elements of practice, such as the śrīcakra, is the result of the efforts of high caste initiates in positions of authority within the temple. Be they politicians, patrons or temple priests, these initiates have had sufficient influence to bring elements of Śrīvidyā into the mainstreams of temple life. Efforts are frequently overt and deliberate, such as it appears in the case of the temple of Muneśvaram in Chilaw, Śrī Laṅka or in the Kāmākṣī temple

of Kāñcipuram, but there are also situations in which oral lore alone forms the basis of the local tradition, such as within the Mīṇākṣī temple of Madurai.

Contemporary adepts are deeply divided over the issue of the appropriateness and role of Śrīvidyā worship in public settings. Since worship focuses on the śrīcakra rather than the śrīvidyā there are different sets of restrictions concerning its ritual use and interpretation; these conditions are accompanied by different attitudes. The cakra considered as an intrinsically powerful configuration has led some adepts to disapprove of its worship in any explicit or exoteric public context. Others insist that since it is a form of the supreme Śakti (in fact, the "highest" (parā) form) its worship in public settings increases benefits for all participants and includes those not immediately present. The effectiveness of the worship, they contend, depends on worship performed by a qualified adept; since no secret mantras (such as the śrīvidyā in its mūlamantra form) or interpretations accompany the ritual performance there is no inherent danger or reason to restrict access to witnessing of the pūjā.

Whether or not adepts approve of public Śrīvidyā ritual performances, they must nonetheless interpret such events since they invariably do occur and are comparable to the

rituals of the private tradition. One adept of the "Guru" Mandali who was not among the hereditary priests of Muneśvaram explained his own attitude:

> There is certainly room for Śrīvidyā in other than strictly private forms of worship. But what one sees in the temples is vastly different than in private ritual worship, especially the navāvarana [śrīcakra] pūjā. While it appears to be identical in form there is far less emphasis on the individual adept's own ritual position---he does not spend much time doing the repetition (japa) of the mantra and often restricts what he says aloud in order to conceal the mantras from the unqualified. In essence, he performs the worship for others, not for the sake of his own discipline. This is in keeping with the spirit of the tradition, certainly, but it is not the same as what is done to advance in personal discipline (sādhana) and in offering the ritual act for the general benefit of the world. The uninitiated devotee gets only a general benefit from witnessing such rituals or receiving the prasāda. But you will find that only a very few pay any attention to the ritual and it is even the case that initiates do not involve themselves as they might unless they themselves are performing the ritual.[1]

Other adepts not approving of public displays of Śrīvidyā must still explain its presence in temples and other semi-public settings, such as its enshrinement beside the tomb (samādhi) of a deceased adept.[2] These dissenters interpret public worship as less "efficacious" in general since it is diluted by the involvement, even passive involvement, of the uninitiated. One explains in his own terms how Śrīvidyā made the transition from private to public settings:

> Śrīvidyā is such a powerful and compelling teaching that it is little wonder it has become popular even though it was never designed to be. When it is found in temples or in other places where it is no longer confined to initiates, then it no longer serves the same purposes. The person performing the pūjā cannot possibly be involved in the practice in the same way because the mantras and ritual acts are all done aloud and so that everyone can see them. Sometimes when the ritual is not performed publicly and yet the śrīcakra is worshipped, like in the Kāmākṣī temple, there is not enough attention paid to the śrīcakra itself. We must accept that Śrīvidyā is part of the traditions of these places but it cannot be said to be equal to what is done in private by the adept transforming the ritual into internal sacrifice (antaryāga).[3]

There is also ambivalence expressed concerning the cakra as an intrinsically powerful configuration and its being "empowered" by proper qualified ritual use. But unlike the mantra, the cakra's configuration cannot be completely concealed in public settings as are its meanings and ritual interpretations. The power of the mantra lies primarily in its being a "sound essence" paralleling the spiritual/material universe and thus its interpretation, however significant, is deemed secondary for ritual efficacy. In the case of the śrīcakra, however, there is a greater emphasis laid on ritual knowledge and the interpretation of the configuration as a representation of the universe conceived esoterically. Simply to come into visual contact with the śrīcakra is not to be confronted with its most powerful aspect, that is, as a ritual object

understood to be a manifestation of Śakti. Even permanently installed _śrīcakras_ do not command from the uninitiated the same attention as anthropomorphic images. Unlike the familiar anthropomorphic image, the cakra's abstract form creates more mystery than accessibility for the uninitiated devotee. In the case of the mantra, the sounds themselves are the central component of ritual efficacy and these need not be part of a public performance.

While most adepts deem the cakra the supreme aspect (_parā_) of the goddess superceding the subtle (_sūkṣma_) mantra, its physical form is not secret in the same manner or to the same degree as the mantra; or at least it has not been so closely guarded a secret. The _śrīcakra_ has become part of the popular ethos of Hindu goddess worship visually identified or somehow associated with Śakti outside Śrīvidyā. The same cannot be said of the Śrīvidyā mantra: the mantra's forms and meanings are not a part of the popular lore surrounding the goddess but are limited to the initiated circle of adepts. Some non-initiates many suspect and even have a knowledge of mantras directly associated with the goddess's imagery but none would have contact with the actual mantras without consulting recently printed texts or obtaining them from adepts.

While many non-initiates may consider the cakra abstract and its ritual use obscure or restricted, many

worship it as they do anthropomorphic images. When _both_ types of images are present in a single shrine, however, the cakra clearly takes second place in popular worship. While the physical cakra may be deemed a valuable and powerful object in a way that a mere decorative anthropomorphic image of the goddess may not, when the cakra is placed beside a consecrated image, the cakra is clearly of secondary interest to the non-initiate.

The heart of the issue is accessibility, that is, the degree to which a devotee relates and formulates a relationship with the divinity represented or installed in a particular form of imagery. The _śrīcakra_'s configuration is _inherently_ powerful (even if this is qualified in the minds of initiates) and has, as it were, a magical affect on the physical and spiritual environment. A decorative image of the goddess stands as a mere _representation_ of the goddess's presence. When placed side by side and a representational image ritually installed obtains power far greater than the _inherent_ power of the cakra's form. The accessibility of the anthropomorphic form brings it to the forefront of the non-initiate's attentions. It is not necessarily a different kind of power envisioned in the cakra but the level of perceived power and the devotee's access to it. The _śrīcakra_ ritually installed in a permanent shrine lacks the accessibility of an anthropomorphic image though adepts

(and a small minority of non-initiates) may consider it "superior" or a more sublime representation of the divine presence.[4]

The Mīnākṣī temple of Madurai offers an example of the popular association of the _śrīcakra_ and the anthropomorphic goddess within contemporary temple tradition. Historical materials make no reference to a relationship between Mīnākṣī and the cakra though, according to some temple priests and Śrīvidyā adepts, oral tradition has perpetuated a relationship from ancient times. Within the Mīnākṣī temple the _śrīcakra_ has been associated with the Goddess. As in other situations in which there is no historical or formal relationship between the esoteric, private Śrīvidyā tradition and the prescribed temple traditions, Śrīvidyā is visible by a direct association of the figure of the beneficent goddess and the _śrīcakra_. From the standpoint of the Śrīvidyā adept the general implication is that wherever the _śrīcakra_ is present the goddess is in her supreme and beneficent form and is identified with the particular localized Śakti. From another perspective a different conclusion may be drawn: it may not be the _śrīcakra_'s presence that determines or identifies the goddess as an aspect of the supreme Śakti but the goddess's local aspect

which has led to an association with the _śrīcakra_. From the adept's point of view the _śrīcakra_'s presence indicates both Śiva and Śakti, the female aspect being the dominant and quasi-independent form of the supreme goddess (_parāśakti_). For the devotee, the _śrīcakra_ provides another indication of Mīnākṣī's mystical (or esoteric) dimensions as well as suggests her superiority with respect to other forms of divinity.

The Mīnākṣi temple's written traditions give no indication of any formal ritual or historical relationship between Śrīvidyā and the various forms of daily and occasional worship. Yet there is oral lore passed among the temple's hereditary priests and others which perpetuates various visual and material forms of association. According to one oral tradition, the image of Mīnākṣī within the inner sanctum of the temple actually stands upon a _śrīcakra_.

The goddess is, according to these priests, standing atop Mt. Sumeru on the _bindu_ of the _śrīcakra_. Like other aspects of the oral lore, this tradition is unverifiable if only because there is no occasion for moving the permanently installed image to observe what lies between the icon and the base. Curiously, other Śrīvidyā adepts with no formal links to the Mīnākṣī temple independently corroborated this tradition when asked if they knew of any temple in which the _śrīcakra_ is present but not immediately visible or apparent.

The priests went on to say that no particular worship of the _śrīcakra_ is performed because its worship is subsumed by rituals offered to the anthropomorphic image; furthermore, the priests indicated that the tradition is a secret and not known even to many of their colleagues. The cakra, they maintain, was part of the original construction of the temple and has been part of the esoteric tradition ever since.

According to another oral tradition the _śrīcakra_ lies in a chamber below the image of the goddess but is no longer worshipped. Several priests I later interviewed expressed no familiarity with this so-called oral, esoteric tradition.

It is difficult to assess why such oral traditions should persist in a temple rich in its own traditional mythology and lore, especially when they have no sound historical or textual basis. Yet it is clear that those perpetuating these ideas believe that the association of the goddess with the _śrīcakra_ enhances the stature of both and affirms the ascendancy of Mīnākṣī as an aspect of the supreme Śakti.

Individuals most interested in obtaining a _śrīcakra_ or learning more about its relationship with the goddess are mostly urban and middle class Hindus rather than less affluent village folk. This is not to suggest that urban

devotees have a theology that is necessarily more sophisticated than village Hindus or but that their exposure to these images has led to a more conscious association between the goddess's anthropomorphic image and the _śrīcakra_. One might also suggest that the city life is more conducive to a perusal of such religious interests---there is simply a greater breath of religious activity in this environment and more frequent opportunities for organized religious involvement. As a result, the association of local beneficent goddesses with the _śrīcakra_ has become an established part of the visual and conceptual structure of the larger pattern of theology and ritual surrounding temple worship in urban Tamil Nāḍu.

There are several popular visual parallels that reflect this direct association between Mīṇākṣī and the _śrīcakra_. Mīṇākṣī in her quasi-independent form as the supreme divinity (that is, standing alone and giving no indication of her relationship to Śiva) is frequently depicted as standing above the _śrīcakra_. Pictures of the goddess in this position are available from a shop under the direct supervision of the temple authorities. There is, at the very least, a tacit acceptance of the association of the goddess with the _śrīcakra_ though there is no further official explanation or stated relationship. Even the

casual observer or devotee cannot fail to make a visual association between the image of Mīnākṣī and the śrīcakra though official statements and literature published by the temple authorities, including comments made by the majority of the hereditary priests, make no mention of any relationship. The relationship, however, is reinforced by the availability of coin-like amulets bearing Mīnākṣī's form and name in Tamil script on one side and the image of the śrīcakra on the obverse. These amulets are also sold within the many shops inside the temple and in those under the auspices of the temple authorities. Various two- and three-dimensional forms of the śrīcakra are also available in paper and a variety of metals. One of the shop-keepers said this about the amulets and pictures of the śrīcakra:

> Many people come to buy pictures of Devī and of the śrīcakra. Most of them, I would say, know that there is some very definite relationship between the śrīcakra and the goddess but even I do not really understand what it is. We know that one goes with the other. Others are just looking for a yantra to perform some kind of pūjā to because they want something from the god and believe that this will insure its coming. The coins are very popular, many people carry them around or wear them around the neck in order to protect themselves or as a devotion to Devī.

It is not only Mīnākṣī whose image is imprinted on the obverse of these amulet coins bearing the śrīcakra but also Kāmākṣī of Kāñcipuram and the image of Śaṅkarācārya. The association of the śrīcakra with other beneficent goddesses

in Tamil Nāḍu is complemented by an explicit link to the Śaṅkara traditions. The Mīnākṣī temple offers one of the more conspicuous examples of the influence of Śrīvidyā's elements on the popular worship of the goddess in contexts lacking an historical relationship to the tradition _per se_. While in the case of Mīnākṣī there is no indication of a stated historical relationship with the _śrīcakra_ or its worship in the temple in other cases, such as with the goddess Akhilandeśvarī (near Tiruchirappalli), the link is subtly present: the goddess in this instance wears the _śrīcakra_ as her earrings, said to have been given to her by none other than Śaṅkara himself.

The significant point in these cases is that there is no active worship of the _śrīcakra_ the maintenance of any Śrīvidyā ritual within the temple (such as there is, for example, at Muneśvaram in Śrī Laṅka) and yet the image of the _śrīcakra_ has become quite explicitly part of the goddess' personality. The cakra is not merely an accidental accretion but a means of identifying the goddess with the supreme Śakti through a specific esoteric image. The _śrīcakra_'s presents confirms an association of each localized Devī with a well-known form of the goddess as she appears in the Sanskritic tradtion and thus provides not only a symbol of theological supremacy but serves as a link between local and pan-Indian traditions. As one adept

remarked:

> Since the śrīcakra is the combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras and has the power of both deities, it is not only an image of Devī but one of Śiva---it is complete. When you see it with each [localized] goddess she is usually not seen with Śiva because the cakra has included him...While only a few will know this, it is important because despite the differences you can observe between the various aspects of Devī, the śrīcakra is always the same---it is the complete form of God even though most ordinary people [i.e., non-initiates] do not realize it. I do not know who is responsible for putting the śrīcakra in these places but I do feel that it makes clear the supremacy of Devī in all of her forms.[5]

The goddess Kāmākṣī in Kāñcipuram bears the closest physical resemblance to Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī of any of the various beneficent goddesses of south India. This is surely not coincidental since at the feet of the goddess within the inner sanctum of the temple is installed within a brass basin a two-dimensional (bhūprastāra) śrīcakra made of five metals (pañcalokam). Nearly every depiction of Kāmākṣī includes the śrīcakra and most maintain a literal resemblance to the image within the temple.

While the relationship between the anthropomorphic goddess and the śrīcakra is perhaps more explicit and direct here than in any other temple in south India, there is little question that the majority of devotees seeking the goddess's darśan are interested primarily in the physical image. The śrīcakra is of secondary importance; this is reflected in the manner in which it is treated by the

temple's hereditary priests. The priests, only one of whom is a Śrīvidyā initiate, treat the cakra less reverently than the anthropomorphic goddess. Thus, when distributing to devotees the ritual gifts (prasāda) of regularly performed pūjās, the priests treat the cakra with less attention, stepping over and around in ways Śrīvidyā adepts find inappropriate.

The chief hereditary priest of the Kāmākṣī temple maintains that the śrīcakra has been part of the temple tradition at least since the time of Śaṅkara who is said to have performed a reestablishment ritual (pūrṇabhiṣeka) following a desecration by the Buddhists. The temple is presently managed by the Śaṅkara pīṭha in Kāñcipuram which maintains authority over both religious and administrative activities. The chief priest did not hesitate to discuss śrīcakra worship which he maintains has continued unbroken over the generations even though there is no lineage established among the priestly families themselves. At present, he asserts, only he performs the navāvaraṇa śrīcakra pūjā on the full and new moon days of each month and no other priests are qualified to perform any more than an arcana of the LSN or other devotional worship. He was, curiously enough, initiated into the śrīvidyā and taught the Śrīvidyā rituals by the guru of the "Ānanda" Maṇḍali though he is not himself a member of the group. While the "Ānanda"

lineage (here distinguished from the organization of the Mandali) theoretically accepts the use of the _pañcamakāras_ and other Kaula influenced Tantric rituals, these "unacceptable" activities are omitted from the worship of the cakra within the temple.

It is the association of the Śaṅkara tradition with the temple and the cakra that is most puzzling if only because of the absence of any claim to the continuity of a Śaṅkara-instituted lineage regarding the worship of either the image or the _śrīcakra_.[6] Instead there is only an oral tradition associating Śaṅkara with the installation of the _śrīcakra_ and the involvement of the present Śaṅkarācārya with certain rituals performed on the temple grounds. The priest explained the tradition of worshipping the _śrīcakra_ within the temple as he understood it:

> The ordinary _pūjās_ to the goddess are performed with the door to the sanctum left open, though at appropriate times such as dressing the deity, the curtain is pulled. With the _śrīcakra_, however, the door is closed and the _pūjā_ is performed in private. This is the temple tradition from ancient times. There is no one else to perform the _pūjā_ and I try to do it regularly [but don't always]...We believe that there has been continuous worship here of the _śrīcakra_ since the time of Śaṅkara and perhaps before.[7]

If the priest's account is trustworthy then it is clear that the individuals responsible initially for the inclusion

of the *śrīcakra* within Kāmākṣī's shrine still maintained that its worship was, in its essential form, secret and not meant to be a public observance. Though the priest emphasized that no "objectionable" activities went on behind closed doors, he was unable to explain why the *pūjā* was kept secret or, at least, entirely private. There does not appear to be an oral tradition explaining either the presence or the precise manner of *śrīcakra* worship within the Kāmākṣī temple though there are clearly defined prescriptions concerning certain aspects of the form of worship, such as its being performed with only the priest present and its not including Kaula elements such as the *pañcamakāras*. If ever there was an established tradition of worship, as some adepts not directly associated with the temple maintain, then it has not survived within the families of the hereditary priests.[8]

Certainly the Śrīvidyā votaries originally involved in instituting the worship of the *śrīcakra* within the temple succeeded in bringing it into the more open and public setting of the temple without sacrificing specific elements of traditional secrecy. Leaving aside historical caste restrictions regarding entrance into the temple premises, the effect of the presence of the *śrīcakra* before Kāmākṣī has been to establish it popularly as part of her personality and yet retain an esoteric association that is

neither discussed nor considered except by those relatively few Śrīvidyā adepts who visit the temple or have a knowledge of it. The result has been twofold: (1) There is a distinct lack of attention paid to the śrīcakra which appears to diminish its importance both in the eyes of devotees and the priests and yet (2) the cakra maintains an aura of power especially for Śrīvidyā adepts concerned with its interpretation in a public setting. Certainly the tradition of a "closed door pūjā" has added to the mystique of the śrīcakra but it has not served to increase its popularity. According to one adept who frequently visits the temple, this is one of the aims of its public worship.

> The benefits of the śrīcakra worship are distributed to all who come into contact with it in the temple. But there is an important distinction between those who are qualified only to worship it in the ordinary way [public] and those who can perform the ritual (pūjā) [privately]. In this case there is a further restriction on the qualification (adhikāra) of the worshipper because the pūjā can only be done by one of the hereditary priests who is also a Śrīvidyā worshipper. But the result is that the benefits of the worship are distributed without involving the uninitiated in types of religious practice for which they have no qualification. This protects them and leads to no further confusion: the cakra is simply a part of the temple tradition and most people do not think about it any more deeply than that. It is fair to say that many know that the śrīcakra and Devī are related but not many know anything about its [i.e., the cakra's] significance, or even ask about it. What is secret or open, they do not consider, even adepts who do not ordinarily [maintain a] practice at all in public accept the śrīcakra as part of the temple tradition. There is no [sic] contradiction for them just as there

> is no confusion for the uninitiated person who sees the *śrīcakra* first with Kāmākṣī and then with some other goddess...They simply accept it.[9]

The final remark of this passage ("They simply accept it.") can be easily overlooked but is important for our appreciation of the complexities of Hindu attitudes toward worship and imagery. The prevailing sentiment in many instances in which seemingly contradictory or conflicting evidence is presented is "acceptance". Even more intellectually oriented adepts often let paradoxes stand without pursuing strict theological consistency or interpretive formulation. In this case, one finds a remarkable lack of interest on the part of worshippers to question the relationship between the physical image of the goddess and the *śrīcakra*: the vast majority simply accept that there is some reason or relationship that, in effect, does not concern their own worship. Many realize that there are individuals who *do* know about such matters and this knowledge confers on them a certain elevated status, but for the majority of the non-initiates there is little concern for the such details.

Even in the case of those directly involved and, to some degree, knowledgeable about the temple's traditions a comparable situation occurs. The chief priest, for example, maintains that there is an historical relationship between Sankara and the presence of the *śrīcakra* before Kāmākṣī and

a continuing influence from the Śaṅkara maṭha, but does not see any inconsistency in his own relationship to this tradition. Having been initiated by a guru with no formal relationship to the temple and one that accepts concepts and practices that are theoretically anathema to established temple orthodoxy (such as the use of the pañcamakāras), the priest sees no conflict of interest or conceptual inconsistency with regard to his own practice and interpretations. Both the Śaṅkara based tradition and the tradition of his own initiation, are kept side by side though they apparently conflict on theoretical and practical issues. The priest is not unaware that there are differences of opinion on certain doctrinal and practical matters but chooses to let them stand as part of the whole tradition. What is deemed acceptable in one context of Śrīvidyā worship is considered inappropriate in another--- there is no effort to raise the question of which is "true". The priest saw his first duty as that of a priest of the Kāmākṣī temple; being a Śrīvidyā adept was to him an added indication of his special relationship to the goddess.[10]

One certainly cannot conclude that such attitudes reflect confused or naive minds; that the present situation appears to parallel historical attitudes, however, offers a key to our developing understanding. Hindus at all levels of theological sophistication live with paradoxes rather

than in spite of them, whether they be a part of the visual imagery, intellectual argument or ritual practice. Paradoxes are, as it were, as elements of faith rather than inconsistencies or obstacles in its development. Śrīvidyā adepts share in this ethos of paradoxical belief; what an outsider might deem contradictory or as impugning the consistency of the theology, the pious devotee often accepts as part of a larger mosaic pattern that is as mysterious as it is beyond the limits of reason.

This is not to suggest that Hindus are not as convinced of the absoulte veracity of their own particular beliefs as are members of any other faith, but that there is a far more deliberate effort to let seemingly contradictory concepts stand as part of the multifariousness of a tradition that finds resolution in individual faith. This situation is nowhere more apparent than among the highly individualized teachings of Tantras in which gurus instruct disciples of a single lineage into practices that, at face value, are blatantly opposed.

The observations of Wendy O'Flaherty, whose work on the seeming contradictions surrounding the figure of Śiva, are particularly relevant to a discussion of Śākta Tantrism. She observes:

> ...one must avoid seeing a contradiction or paradox where the Hindu sees an opposition in the Indian sense---correlative opposites that act as interchangeable identities in essential

> relationships. The contrast between the erotic and ascetic tradition in the character and mythology of Siva is not the kind of °conjunction of opposites' with which it has so often been confused. Tapas (asceticism) and kāma (desire) are not diametrically opposed like black and white, or heat and cold, where the complete presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other....This tendency to increase rather than minimize the distance between conflicting ideas is basic to Indian thought.[11]

O'Flaherty offers a resolution of these paradoxes through various avenues of interpretation, particularly relying on the psychological value of mythology and the "irrational solution" of loving devotion (bhakti). While her account focuses on a different set of materials than those considered here, her insights are no less applicable. Within Śrīvidyā tradition the presence of secret elements of tradition in public settings can be explained similarly; seemingly antithetical or unrelated values and concepts (viz., secrecy and openness) are brought together in a common context and yet are left intact as part of a larger theological and mythical pattern. The instances cited in the present study are a microcosm of a matrix of values that permeates Hindu theology.

The relationship of the Śaṅkara matha in Kāñcipuram to the Kāmākṣī Temple worship of the śrīcakra (and the cakra's public worship elsewhere in Tamil Nāḍu) is also noteworthy for the seeming historical and doctrinal paradoxes involved. According to the chief priest of the Kāmākṣī temple, the

present Śaṅkarācārya, like those before him, secretly practices the śrīcakra pūjā within the maṭha as part of his daily devotions. Though he does not perform any such rituals in public or within the Kāmākṣī temple, it is a common belief not only among temple priests but among Śrīvidyā adepts that the Śaṅkarācārya is intimately involved with Śrīvidyā. The Śaṅkarācārya himself declined to elaborate on his own private practices but he was very clear on the matter of the traditional ascription of Śrīvidyā works such as SL and LTSB to the historical Śaṅkara (i.e., the Ādiśaṅkara).

While the matter of his personal involvement is ambivalent, there can be little doubt that the Śaṅkarācārya openly supports and encourages ritual performances, publications and other activities of Śrividyā adepts. He has on several occasions authorized Śrīvidyā rituals, including the construction of a large meru śrīcakra within the Kāmākṣī temple's grounds in 1979 to accompany an elaborate homa. Several organized Mandalis actively seek his blessings before proceeding with semi-private rituals or publications and make special public note of his official sanction. Though it is difficult to assess all the motivations behind such actions, the effect is to legitimize and sanction Śrīvidyā in the public eye and hence disassociate it from other "Tantric" sects. Groups

dominated by smārta Brahmins gain a certain degree of status by having themselves associated with the Śaṅkarācārya and the traditions of the maṭha. Furthermore, by aligning themselves with the "orthodox" Śaṅkara traditions adepts are "sanitized" of "Tantric" influences and gain a kind of historical legitimacy.

At the popular level of visual associations, the present Śaṅkarācārya in Kāñcipuram, Jayendra Sarasvatī (along with his better known immediate predecessor), is often pictured beside a śrīcakra. While he is not as frequently depicted with a śrīcakra as he is with an image of the goddess Kāmākṣī, there is a popular association relating him to Kāmākṣī, her temple and the śrīcakra. Conversations with the Śaṅkarācārya did not reveal his purported familiarity with Śrīvidyā literature and while it is impossible to confirm the reports of his private practice of Śrīvidyā, the popular belief that he conducts regular śrīcakra pūjā would seem unlikely. Unfortunately, the administration of the maṭha was not entirely cooperative or informative, though several individuals did maintain privately their own belief that the present Śaṅkarācārya is as personally involved with Śrīvidyā as his predecessors have been since the time of the Ādiśaṅkara. Publicly the Śaṅkarācārya performs only Śiva pūjās and only obliquely refers to the goddess and her worship. Neither the maṭha

authorities nor the Śaṅkarācārya would elaborate further on his involvement with Śrīvidyā except to affirm the Ādiśaṅkara's purported authorship of Śrīvidyā works and to extend their support for the activities of various groups and individuals involved with "pure" (i.e., non-Kaula) Śrīvidyā. The link between Śrīvidyā and the Śaṅkara pīṭha rests primarily on the quasi-historical relationship of the maṭha tradition to textual traditions associated with the eighth century Śaṅkara.

While the śrīcakra within the Kāmākṣī temple and the temple's relationship with the Śaṅkara pīṭha are the most explicit public displays of Śrīvidyā in Tamil Nāḍu, the origin of the temple's imagery and the Śaṅkara tradition's relationship to Śrīvidyā remain obscure. One is led to conclude that both institutions have undergone significant developments despite claims of continuity with the ancient tradition. Śrīvidyā votaries frequently resort to explanations involving traditional secrecy to account for these discrepancies; historical accuracy remains a secondary consideration when viewed against the Śrīvidyā's self-understanding of its history and practices. For the Śrīvidyā adept maintaining a pious devotion to the traditions of Śaṅkara and the worship of the śrīcakra within the Kāmākṣī temple, the "truth" depends largely on an interpretation of theological traditions rather than on a

critical appraisal of history.

While the origins of Śrīvidyā worship in Kāñcipuram are historically obscure, at the temple of Naṭaraja in Cidambaram there are important clues suggesting the appearance of the <u>śrīcakra</u> from perhaps as early as the seventh century, C.E. References by the Tamil <u>siddha</u> Tirumūlar have been discussed above in Part One; of concern here is the specific mention of the <u>śrīcakra</u> in the works of the thirteenth century figure, Umāpatiśivācārya. Umāpati must be considered particularly authoritative regarding the traditions of the Naṭarāja temple since he was himself a member of the priestly clan that has controlled its religious and administrative affairs, the so-called Three Thousand of Cidambaram (in Tamil, <u>thillai</u> <u>mōvayiravar</u>). He therefore had access to the temple's most restricted areas (such as the inner sanctums of the shrines) and, as a matter of birthright, received initiation into the rites and mantras associated with the temple's deities. Though best known as a proponent of the predominantly south Indian Saiva Siddhānta tradition, Umāpati was a gifted poet as well as a theologian and temple priest. His <u>Kuñcitāṅghristava</u>, the 315 verses eloquently extolling the glories of the dancing Śiva, brings Śrīvidyā directly into the discussion of

Naṭarāja's worship. Other than his mention of the cakra, the śrīvidyā and the beneficent goddess in this particular work, there is no indication that Umāpati had any further involvement with Śrīvidyā tradition. Only one known lineage (the "Guru" Mandali profiled above) has had even a tangential link to the temple and its forms of worship.[12] Bhāskararāya mentions the temple and, specifically, the consort of Naṭarāja, Śivakāmasundarī, but offers no further elaboration on the roles each play in the practice of Śrīvidyā in Cidambaram.[13]

Internal literary evidence in the Kuñcitāṅghristava provides the most compelling association of the śrīcakra and the cidākāsarahasya, that is, the yantra of Naṭarāja better known as the Cidambaram rahasya (or "secret of Cidambaram") or the sammelanacakra. Popular lore attesting that this yantra is a combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras is reiterated by Umāpati.

Verse Twenty of the Kuñcitāṅghristava removes any doubt that at least half of the Cidambaram rahasya is the śrīcakra, though it remains unclear precisely what elements of the configuration are present or what constitutes the Śiva portion of the yantra. It says:

> I praise the bent leg [of Naṭarāja] whom [the Dīkṣītar priests] worship each day, sacrificing to that one [i.e., the goddess and Śiva] established in the śrīcakra on the wall [and] to Him within the Śiva cakra, the Lord of Dance, [and] to [His] left [She, his consort, Śivakāmasundarī] who has

> two hands, holds the parrot and is the power of knowledge (jñānaśakti); whom having worshipped the Earth (go), Brahma and others and presenting various types of offerings and bali, have performed the fire sacrifice (homa).[14]

The reference to the cakra being "on the wall" can only refer to the rahasya to the right of the image of Naṭarāja in the so-called kanaka sabha, or "golden sanctum". The yantra is further obscured to the devotee by a metal grate and appears as little more than a dark, flat rectangle bearing spots of golden bilva leaves. The exact configuration of the underlying yantra is not discussed openly by the Dīkṣītars but it is plain from Umāpati's verse that the Śakti portion is, at least in his estimation, the śrīcakra.[15] This reference appears more authoritative than other oral lore surrounding the yantra because Umāpati, by virtue of his access to the sanctum and the temple traditions, would have been in a position to know the configuration precisely and would have had access to a theological interpretation relating it to Naṭarāja. Despite the temple's changing fortunes over the centuries, there appears to be little doubt that the oldest part of the structure and its basic infrastructure have remained intact and are likely to date from as early as the sixth century. Umāpati appears to confirm what Tirumūlar only suggested in his Tirumantiram: the sammelanacakra, the "secret" form of Naṭarāja considered his most transcendent and esoteric

aspect, is partially, or properly speaking, half consisting of the śrīcakra. A member of the "Guru" Mandali offers a further clarification:

> The śrīcakra portion of the sammelanacakra consists only of the inner parts [of the yantra], that is, from the [fourteen minor triangles] of the manvaśracakra to the bindu. This I have come to know [through siddhi] and by questioning the priests that I am personally very close to. It lacks the outer lotus petals and the bhūpura. This leads us to believe that this portion [i.e., the interlacing triangles] is the origin form of the śrīcakra since it is part of the Naṭarāja rahasya from at least the sixth century. It may very well be much older than that. The Śiva portion of the yantra and how it fits together with the śrīcakra is unclear to me as yet, but Umāpati seems to say that there is very definitely another part, that the śrīcakra itself is not the combination of Śiva and Śakti cakras alone.[16]

Umāpati's remarks, generally confirming this contemporary adept's views, lead one to believe that elements of Śrīvidyā in an established, orthodox temple setting date from at least the sixth century. Even if one relies on only Umāpati's references, excluding the suggestive remarks of Tirumūlar, there can be no doubt that Śrīvidyā had come, at least in a private and secretive way, into the heart of the southern Śaiva temple cult no later than the thirteenth century.[17] The actual worship of the śrīcakra appears to have been subsumed into the worship of the rahasya in general and there is no indication that the majority of contemporary priests are familiar with the intricacies of Śrīvidyā pūjās. That Naṭarāja's yantra

includes the *śrīcakra*, however, is historically one of the most remarkable indications of Tantrism's penetration into public and established orthodox centers before the period of its formal Samaya interpretions.

Verse 110 of *Kuñcitāṅghristava* includes a description of the familiar *śrīcakra* including reference to the two sets of lotus petals and the surrounding three circles.[18] This neither matches the opinion of the adept cited above nor does not it conform fully to a *śrīcakra* that appears beside the sub-shrine of Sivakāmasundarī. In deference to the adept's opinion, the verse merely says that the goddess who sits upon Naṭarāja's lap is situated in the cakra, not that the cakra is part of the *rahasya*, as is clear from verse twenty.

The *śrīcakra* beside the Śivakāmasundarī temple is set apart from the central part of this sub-shrine (and away from the inner portion of the temple that includes Naṭarāja and the original sanctum containing a *śivaliṅga*). It recently has been transformed into a stone relief from a painting. The sub-shrine *śrīcakra*'s most important feature is the absence of the *vṛttatraya*. It thus appears to conform to the description of Bhāskararāya and the so-called Hayagrīva Sampradāya. Though the stone configuration is very recent, temple priests say this permanent fixture merely reflects the continued presence of the original

painting which they claim goes back to the earliest expansion of the temple. While it is difficult to assess precisely how old this portion of the temple is and virtually impossible to verify the priest's statements, certainly the identification of Naṭarāja's consort, Śivakāmasundarī, with the <u>śrīcakra</u> is beyond dispute from at least the time of Umāpati. How and why this association was originally conceived is not clear though its occurance confirms one of the most fundamental conclusions of this thesis: Śrīvidyā was known, if not developed, by upper caste, predominantly Brahmin, intellectuals not averse to certain elements of Tantrism (such as the worship of yantras, etc.). These high caste votaries brought their private practices into the mainstreams of public worship without effectively sacrificing the secrecy of the tradition. They incorporated elements such as the <u>śrīcakra</u> but did little to popularize its esoteric meanings or rituals.

In the case of the Naṭarāja temple, there is no reason to believe that the Dīkṣītar priests have maintained any secret tradition of Srīvidyā worship though it is likely that the cakra was initially brought into the temple's tradition because influential individual priests were involved or attracted to Śrīvidyā and because of the cakra's increasingly public recognition as a form of the supreme

Śakti. The temple priests treat Naṭarāja's consort as an aspect of the supreme Śakti even though she is often insignificant in ritual terms and subsumed into his larger personality. As a curious aside, it is noteworthy that adjacent to the newly refurbished śrīcakra in the Śivakāmasundarī sub-shrine has been established a shrine to the historical Śaṅkara that includes his image. When asked about its location, a priest replied that it was only fitting that Śaṅkara should be near the śrīcakra since he is well-known as one its leading proponents.

It may be concluded that even if Śrīvidyā adepts (be they priests or otherwise) were only tangentially responsible for the incorporation of śrīcakra into the iconography of the Naṭarāja temple, their general influence on established orthodoxy was such that the esoteric form of the beneficent Śakti most commonly acknowledged was the śrīcakra. There seems to be little doubt that Śrīvidyā's imagery, if not its theology and forms of worship, had made an imprint on the purveyors of the Śaiva temple cult from at least the thirteenth century, if not much earlier. Since there is no textual prescription, Āgamic or otherwise, for incorporating the śrīcakra into a temple's iconography, the only possible reason for its inclusion is the broad appeal of its imagery and the acceptability of the Śrīvidyā tradition's dominant trends within the historical milieu of

south Indian culture. Had the tradition which created the <u>śrīcakra</u> been viewed as too far beyond the reaches of orthodox acceptance, it seems unlikely that temple authorities would permit the <u>śrīcakra</u>'s inclusion no matter how powerful or compelling its imagery might be.

C. Summary Remarks on Public Forms of Śrīvidyā Tradition

The historical transition from private Śrīvidyā to increasingly public practices and the incorporation of elements such as the <u>śrīvidyā</u>, in public settings is obscure in every major Śaiva/Śākta temple in south India. Śrīvidyā, however, has succeeded in influencing the temple's traditions to the extent that normally unsanctioned, unauthorized rituals and images have become part of established worship. It is also unclear if Śrīvidyā adepts were responsible for the initial inclusion of these elements though there are examples, such as with the chief priest in the Kāmākṣī temple, that suggest that initiates have historically played a leading role in the ritual worship of the <u>śrīcakra</u>. Initiate priests may not receive their instruction in Śrīvidyā as part of the temple tradition; and, in fact, it would appear that instruction has continued to follow the patterns of the private tradition.

It seems quite possible that important figures within temple traditions have involved themselves directly with

Śrīvidyā (as the case in the Kāmākṣī and Cidambaram temples indicate) or, at the very least, that "inside" figures have been aware of Śrīvidyā and incorporated its elements by accommodating them to suit particular situations. Only in the case of the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Śrī Lanka is there any clearly established relationship between Śrīvidyā and the hereditary priests responsible for all temple activities. Since private Śrīvidyā in south India is dominated historically by high-castes, and perhaps exclusively by Brahmins, then ritual or theoretical elements already considered acceptable to the orthodox majority posed no genuine dilemma of potential acceptability in public temple settings. It nevertheless is remarkable that Śrīvidyā, considering its strong ties to Kaula Tantrism and emphasis on secrecy, has had an impact on the imagery, ritual and theological content of public goddess worship.

Throughout Śrīvidyā's history in south India, however, its elements, particularly the _śrīcakra_, have never become more than a mysterious and esoteric part of the popular ethos surrounding the goddess in her supreme, beneficent manifestations. Though it has moved into public settings that no longer restrict access to secret mantras or exclude the involvement (be it passive or otherwise) of non-initiates, the essential secrecy of Śrīvidyā's elements is maintained. Non-initiates are neither told what they are

worshipping nor are they informed of the meaning and content of the ritual practice. All that is registered at the level of a non-initiate's involvement is that there is some intimate relationship between the śrīcakra and the various forms of Śakti in her beneficent (saumya) aspect. Initiates offer no public explanations, no lectures or sponsored instruction linked to temple activities other than ordinary published works, many of which are idiosyncratic and few accessible to the common devotee. In effect, practices involving Śrīvidyā's traditional elements even when placed in public settings have not strayed far from the limited access that formed part of its original Tantric heritage. Perhaps the most crucial secret element within the tradition, the śrīvidya, remains almost entirely restricted to initiates or to a very few curious and literate lay persons. The śrīcakra, however, has gained a universal appeal apart from initiated interpretations.

It is possible that the śrīcakra's imagery alone is the key reason for its emergence into public from originally private settings though evidence points more towards a deliberate introduction into public contexts by individuals with roots in both traditional communities, that is, with authority over temples and as Śrīvidyā adepts. The powerful influence of the Śaṅkara tradition, in south India in particular, has undoubtedly reinforced the link between

Śrīvidyā and the communities of Śaivas and smārta Brahmins and has affected the development of temple traditions, as we have observed in both Cidambaram and Kāñcipuram. Unfortunately, the historical relationship between the eighth century figure of Śaṅkara and the modern Śaṅkara tradition is not illumined by its relationship with Śrīvidyā tradition except to the extent that it is possible to affirm that the transition to a Śaiva/Śākta theological base seems complete by no later than the tenth century and that the tradition's relationship to Śrīvidyā remains a crucial factor in its increasing popularity and influence over high caste communities. The Śaṅkara tradition's patronage and historical relationship to Śrīvidyā has been a major reason for its successful assimilation into the popular ethos as part of the visible, exoteric traditions of goddess worship. It would appear that historically a small minority of high caste participants are responsible for introducing esoteric and secret elements of Śākta Tantrism into the mainstreams of Hindu visual imagery and theology.

* * * * * * * *

1. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

2. One such place exists in Madurai. Here a guru supported by the "Siddha" Mandali and other patrons is entombed beneath a Śiva linga. Directly adjacent to this shrine is another containing a meru śrīcakra. Both are worshipped regularly by a priest belonging to the "Siddha" Mandali in the employ of the Trust which effectively controls the shrine's activities. Members of the "Siddha" and "Gāyatrī" Mandalis frequent this place of worship and one junior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali is regularly possessed by the soul of the entombed siddha. This has put members of both Mandalis in an easy alliance though their Śrīvidyā practices remain distinct and discussion does not seem to involve any theological matters concerning Śrīvidyā ritual. Interest lies directly in the worship of the śrīcakra in a manner that both parties can accept since both acknowledge a Kaula heritage but, in fact, follow the conventions of Tamil smārta Brahmin society. The adhisthāna, as the tomb and place of worship is technically called, draw a large number of followers with little or no knowledge of Śrīvidyā or the worship of the śrīcakra. Some revealed that they had come to see the possession and hear the teachings of the siddha. (The occurrences of possession are posted in advance and advertised in local newspapers.) The possessed individual made no allusion to Śrīvidyā at the two scheduled events I attended but rather gave sermons on moral fortitude and following one's prescribed Dharma. The siddha himself it appears worshipped the śrīcakra regularly but gained his reputation not as a Śrīvidyā upāsaka per se but as a Śaiva ascetic. During the siddha's lifetime he did not apparently initiate into Śrīvidyā and his own lineage and practices remain obscure. When he died, however, another popular siddha with a large, well-heeled following took it upon themselves to create this tomb and shrine and endow a Trust for its continued maintenance. The principal patrons in Madurai were members of the "Gāyatrī" and "Siddha" Mandalis who had a personal admiration for the life and work of the siddha.

3. An adept belonging to a Madras-based Mandali, January, 1985.

4. On the attitudes and concepts of worship associated with temple images see, Fuller, p.41f., as cited above for an excellent discussion.

5. A member of the "Guru" Mandali who functions as a priest in the Muneśvaram temple in Chilaw, Sri Lanka, from an interview in Madurai, June, 1985.

6. I have chosen not to delve into the recent history of the temple's administration here since this does not seem to offer any clarification regarding the presence and ritual worship of the śrīcakra.

7. In an interview conducted in the home of the priest in Kāñchipuram, November, 1984.

8. There is one privately published paddhati of the śrīcakra pūjā which claims to be the practice within the Kāmākṣī temple as it was prescribed according to Śaṅkara. This paddhati claims to follow the Samaya interpretation though it lacks the detailed differences that Lakṣmīdhara uses to characterize that tradition (such as the inversion of the śrīcakra for worship). It is particularly interesting that the editors of this manuscript claim it to be the Śrīvidyā teaching of the sage Durvāsa, one of the twelve gurus of the tradition, but not one traditionally important in other lineages. The chief priest noted that he was familiar with the editor of the paddhati and that the work had received the blessings of the Śaṅkarācārya but that he did not believe it reflected the actual traditions of the temple since he himself had been responsible for the worship there for at least the past twenty-five years.

9. A Madras-based Śrīvidyā adept belonging to a lineage not profiled, from a series of interviews conducted in Madras, January, 1985.

10. Bhāskararāya, in a comparable way to the priest's resolution of the temple tradition with his own guru's instructions, praises Śaṅkara, calling him the "Blessed One" and frequently cites him as an interpretive authority. Yet in other passages he proceeds to condemn Śaṅkara's views (notably the reality of the conventional world and the meaning of the term māyā) and distinguishes the "Śākta" view from that of the "kevalādvaitins". See the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya as an example of this tendency.

11. O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, Śiva The Erotic Ascetic. Oxford University Press: New York, 1981, p.35 and p.37.

12. One senior member of the "Guru" Mandali having been raised in the city of Cidambaram and having received initiation before the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti within the Naṭarāja temple, has developed a particularly strong relationship with a family of traditional priests. In addition, the image of Naṭarāja and the mantraśāstra passed within the temple has so deeply influenced his Śrīvidyā practices that the root mantra (mūlamantra) of Naṭarāja is

appended to the śrīvidyā. This is the only occasion in which I have found other mantras deliberately appended to the śrīvidyā and considered a part of its "larger" form. The adept explains his practice by referring to the relationship between Naṭarāja and the śrīcakra.

He remarked: "Since the śrīcakra is part of the rahasya [i.e., Naṭarāja's yantra] it is only appropriate that there is a relationship between the śrīvidyā and the mantra of Lord Naṭarāja."

13. Cf., LSN, n.734, Sastry, p.288.

14. **bhittau śrīcakrasamstham tadānunatapatim śaivacakrantarastham, tadvame yugmahastamapi ca sukakaram jñānaśaktiñca yasthva/ gobrahmādināthesthva sakalāvidhacāruṇārpayitvā bālimstan, homaṃ krtvā yajanti pratidīnamapi yaṃ kuñcitāṅghrim bhaje'ham//** See Sri Kuñcitāṅghristavaḥ Śrimadupāmatiśivaprāṇitaḥ, ed., Brahmasri Ka. Mi. Rajakaneca Tiksitar. Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India: Śrī Naṭarāja Vityasapai, 1958, p.9. All further references are to this edition.

15. The suggestion that śrīcakra here refers to any or another "cakra of Śrī", the goddess and not specifically the śrīcakra has not won any support among contemporary adepts. Considering Umāpati's late date it would seem unlikely that he would use a term with such a specific sense to indicate a cakra other than the well-known śrīcakra.

16. "Naṭarāja" in an interview conducted in Cidambaram, December, 1984.

17. For other references to Srividya in the Kuñcitāṅghristava see verses 60, 101, 109, 110 and 207 and below.

18. The verse reads: **traicatvārīmsadasre vasunṛpākamāle vṛttabhūcakramadhye, bindau sāntānakalpadrumaṇikārayute ṛatnasaudhemanojñe/ brahmādyākārapade sivamayaphalakeśvarṇamañce nispanno, devyāyaḥ pujyate taṃ harimukhavibudhau kuñcitāṅghrim bhaje'haṃ//** (See p.51, edition cited above)

Conclusion

A. The Methodological Problem of Studying Other Faiths

While there are several issues worth further consideration, none seems more germane to the present study than understanding the relationship between Śrīvidyā's historical religious tradition and its living legacy. As it has been observed, understanding historical Tantric sources depends largely on the interpretations of living practitioners. Textual and historical studies without oral interpretations will not uncover the Tantras' elliptical meanings. But one might argue as well that focusing on living practitioners' interpretations or their practices is also not enough. In an esoteric tradition which by definition draws its conclusions from "practical applications" that do not admit access for everyone, even understanding what is said about texts, history, theology or practice becomes problematic to the "outside" observer. Perhaps the scholarly endeavor too must extend beyond its traditional boundaries and accept that the study of "religion" will not come to the heart of the issue, that is, that studying Tantrics' interpretations will not be sufficient for understanding Tantric tradition. The historian of religion that collects textual, historical and practical interpretations in order to understand Tantrism

will still be left on the "outside" and therefore will not appreciate, and perhaps not understand, Tantric tradition or rather the meaning of the term "tradition" as traditionalists do.

A possible solution to the dilemma centers on two considerations. The first consideration is necessary for all further points of reflection: in order to understand Tantric tradition historically and as it exists as a living faith, the historian of religion must not undertake to study the tradition <u>per se</u> but its practitioners. Put differently, one must not focus study only on Tantrism but on Tantrics. However concerned one is with correct and consistent data, Tantrism remains obscure if its human dimensions are neglected or sublated in favor of historical "facts". A successful enquiry into Tantrism depends upon understanding Tantrics as religious persons and considering the broader picture of the life and circumstances of particular Tantric practitioners. One must not only gain access to Tantric interpretations but locate them in the lives of adepts who represent its historical legacy. (Gaining access to these interpretations and individuals is central to the second consideration.) As soon as one abstracts and separates interpretations of text, history or practice from the complete personality of its particular living source, one considers the "tradition" as no adept

understands it; that is, as an entity apart from its practical expressions. Such human-centered historical studies may demand regional contexts (in order to address issues within the specific cultural setting) and depend upon extraordinary circumstances (such as developing relationships with sufficient numbers of practitioners in order to complete "representative" studies), but if the goal is to develop an understanding of the Tantric "tradition" then the historian's first task is to understand the concept of "tradition" as Tantrics do. A concept of Tantric "tradition" cannot be limited to what Tantrics' assert are their central tenets and practices, but must include every aspect of life. Thus the historian must also take on the roles of anthropologist and perhaps even psychologist if he or she is to evaluate Tantrism's religious history. To do less would be to lose sight of the complex relationship between human personalities and history that has always been the central ingredient of Tantric tradition. While the historian uses sources other than those of Tantric adepts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of "tradition" (such as temple records, epigraphy and "outside" textual sources), only when historical studies are augmented to include input from living adepts can facts and interpretations be more fully understood.

As an esoteric tradition demanding initiation and privileged access, Śrīvidyā presents a more basic methodological issue to the historian religions. Stated most succinctly, how is it possible for non-participants to understand even in general terms the elements of a faith that insiders insist can only be understood at the level of personal experience? Put differently, can any study of a self-defined esoteric faith actually convey what is a matter of direct involvement for those to whom it is an all-encompassing way of life demanding special qualifications to understand?

The present study also can not ignore another consideration when responding to these issues, that is, the author's own involvement in the tradition under consideration. As an initiate of the tradition, there is a necessary theological dimension to this study's analysis: to what extent are interpretations dependent upon and conditioned by my own personal involvement?[1] Since Tantric traditions by definition demand an "insider's" knowledge for even superficial understanding, my own involvement provides access to the otherwise restricted views of other adepts.

Adepts feel not only privilege in their initiated status but, for many, a sense of responsibility to respond to the demands this initiation entails. While many view themselves at the pinnacle of religious possibilities, many

also suggest a calling to go beyond their own personal religious aims. In this respect, Śrīvidyā tradition is not merely a secret, privately oriented Tantric sādhana but includes self-imposed injunctions to reach beyond the parameters of the lineage even when it is not in the capacity of an initiate. Tradition demands that the Śrīvidyā adept act for others because he or she is an adept, but not that these actions should propagate or directly involve the intricacies of the spiritual discipline. Some initiates, of course, do not interpret the task with a sense of public responsibility, as observed in the Profiles.

It is significant, however, that Śrīvidyā adepts have not restrained self-criticism as they have when confronting other traditions. Śrīvidyā sources say remarkably little about other groups or philosophical/theological positions. Within the tradition there is a remarkable degree of internal debate and discussion and yet only a few instances of condescension or vilification of other opinions: superiority is asserted but not usually at the expense of others while, at the same time, internal self criticism is an accepted practice within the established structures of authority.

Śrīvidyā adepts, however, clearly distinguish the purely intellectual understanding of the tradition from its experience. While many have contempt for the former, few

impugn the integrity of other adepts who claim access to the latter. Even when adepts are in profound disagreement, personal experience is rarely subjected to the same caustic critiques as doctrinal or practical interpretations. The emphasis on the primacy of individual experiences has fostered a respect for the accounts of other adepts.

The basic methodological dilemma posed here is common to all religious traditions: can any observer of religious life know what lies at the heart of a tradition that he or she does not practice? In this case we have noted the added component of "privileged access" and, as we have seen within the south Indian temples, public, non-initiated levels of involvement and understanding do, in fact, remain limited in deference to the fundamental secrecy of Śrīvidyā's Tantric heritage.[2]

Literary studies may be fruitful beginnings to further investigations but within Tantric traditions the results of these efforts can rarely be deemed conclusive. Oral traditions do not simply augment the meaning of texts, they sometimes provide the only avenue for obtaining any understanding. Purely literary investigation also does not necessarily address the actual practice and interpretation of the faith. In order to produce even accurate descriptions of the practices and theological interpretations of an esoteric tradition, an examination

must include oral sources from within the living tradition and direct observations of actual practices.

This leads to the second consideration for resolving the dilemma of studying Tantrism. As a matter of necessity this means that the scholar must in some manner gain access to trustworthy and authentic sources; access is itself limited to those who have become personally involved and have gained the trust of others similarly committed. The results of such studies "from the insider's perspective" may have inherent liabilities (such as the verifiability of privately acquired information as well as the fact that materials are inevitably "filtered through" the interpretations and experiences of the adept/scholar) but such studies, I would suggest, are perhaps the only legitimate avenue for gaining insight into esoteric traditions such as Hindu Tantrism. Actual historical practices will remain forever obscure unless one obtains first hand accounts that somehow address the discrepancy between what is "said" or "written" and what is actually "done". What we know <u>about</u> living Tantric tradition is perhaps the only bridge from extant written sources to past practices and interpretations based on them. If understanding Tantrism entails direct and personal experience or knowledge within traditions that by definition are inaccessible to non-initiates, then perhaps the only

situation available for scholarship is to observe and record the reflections of Tantrics. Determining the "authenticity" of accounts and interpretations is, to a large degree, defined not only by the scholar's historical and literary knowledge but by his or her personal understanding of the tradition. It is possible that studies of living Tantric traditions can be successful only if initiates conduct the research and take responsibility for divulging the "secret" interpretations of others. Without the scholar-adept's "subjective" insights living interpretations or observed practices cannot be "objectively" understood even superficially; it is not enough to focus on what Tantrics say and do since without some comparable experience from within the tradition recorded interpretations are often impenetrable, obscure or seemingly disjointed.

A scholarly treatment of materials acquired by "privileged access" certainly demands some type of accountability. It is clear, however, that even if sources were traced to their origins, non-initiates attempting to verify or gain similar access to accounts within a tradition might not obtain satisfactory responses. Adepts may not entrust personal accounts---even those on the purely intellectual level of theology---to "outsiders". The credibility of such "insider's studies" obviously depends to a large extent on scholarly integrity and on the training of

the adept in the methods of historical scholarship.[3] If studying with Tantrics is insufficient to penetrate hermeneutical barriers and participation in a tradition is intellectually suspect, then the scholarly enterprise, were it not so important for understanding the history of Indian religions, might be abandoned.

However "distant" the Tantric tradition remains to non-initiates (if even for understanding its historical manifestations one must rely on adepts for accounts of others willing to discuss it), it is possible to come to some understanding of its theologies and practices. Theologians of Western traditions have long argued that a complete understanding of their respective faiths entails participation for both the theologian and the student: that Tantrics should argue similarly is hardly surprising.

B. Oral Tradition and the Impact of Print Technology

Jack Goody, in his analysis of the affects of changing modes of communication on the thought of pre-literate societies, has argued convincingly that advancing technologies have had a profound influence on the development of oral and written traditions.[4] While Goody's discussion focuses on cultures in which literacy is a recent or newly developing situation, the implications of his study are a fruitful source for further consideration of oral

tradition within Śrīvidyā and especially for enriching understanding of the relationship between oral and written modes of transmission.

Unlike Goody's case studies of Africa in which literacy and the impact of the printed word are relatively recent elements affecting a new response to traditionally oral materials, the Śākta Tantras in India present a rather different set of circumstances and a situation that has little in common with pre-literate societies or modes of thought. The Tantras emerged in a society with sophisticated literary traditions intact. Thus while Tantrics did not lack the means to convey tradition in written forms they chose deliberately to maintain texts and interpretations in solely oral forms of transmission for centuries before committing to written modes of expression. Goody's central contribution, however, remains relevant to an understanding of the development of oral tradition and the concept of scripture within Tantrism precisely because it addresses the roles of the changing modes of presentation of materials and emphasizes technological innovation as a major contributing factor affecting the transmission of tradition. While Goody does not contribute to an understanding of why Tantrics made the initial shift from purely oral to written transmission---an issue that may never be satisfactorily resolved at an historical level---

his work is useful for a deeper appreciation of more recent events. It is clear that the transition to printed sources represents another stage in the development of Śrīvidyā tradition in addition to the earlier transition from oral to written modes of transmission. In the case of the shift to printed materials, the affects on oral tradition are less obscure than the rather speculative reasons proposed for the initial move from purely oral to written transmissions.

The essence of Goody's thesis is that the presentation of materials in written and printed forms from preexisting oral forms fundamentally changes the ways in which they can be and actually are considered: stated differently, the shift from purely oral modes to written or printed modes profoundly affects the attitudes of participants and influences their understanding of what is presented. In Śrīvidyā the shift to print from written sources represents a distinct phase in the understanding of "tradition" by adepts.

Goody's position is at least self-evidently true when viewed in light of the material already discussed. But before considering its further implications it is necessary to reflect briefly on the types of oral "tradition" that have developed within Śrīvidyā's lineages and, in the process, to appreciate what Śrīvidyā adepts understand by "oral" transmission and precisely what can be viewed as

"tradition".

Śrīvidyā's "oral" tradition can be defined as any verbal transmission, be it instruction, explanation or exegesis, in which the adept creates some link (stated or implicit) with the past. Thus at the first level of interpretation, an oral tradition is simply whatever an adherent maintains verbally as part of the legacy or interpretation of his or her faith even when it is not acknowledged by others. Historical or social factors, especially when considered in each individual's situation, may be important for determining a particular oral transmission's origins and deciphering its content but such factors may not be central to an adept's interpretation. Without self-conscious reflection or a deliberate effort to assume historical continuity, some oral materials are passed as "traditional" teachings because they relate individual experiences and are formulated out of a personal understanding of what constitutes "tradition". It would appear that the first level of the "traditional" in any oral presentation must refer to individual experiences and reflections draw from personal faith; no oral transmission achieves authenticity without the adherent acknowledging his or her own personal involvement with the tradition. This is the case even when the experience, interpretation or event is considered by the individual as beyond complete

understanding or verbal articulation.

During the present research it became evident that oral "tradition" could be interpreted to mean any attempt on the part of an adept to convey personal experiences; or more precisely, experiences not viewed apart from the adept's sense of historical continuity but neither considered as emerging in direct causal relationships to these conditions.

Thus the first meaning of oral tradition is any adept's verbal transmission relating a personal experience and founded in the adept's understanding of the historical transmission of his or her lineage's teachings. These are part of an "internal" oral tradition, namely, that which is developed and passed within particular lineages. Yet this internal oral tradition is not immune to external influences, such as the oral and written lore surrounding teachings and practices of the tradition in pan-Indian and regional settings. But neither, from the adept's perspective, is internal oral tradition utterly dependent upon historically documented materials.

Individually developed interpretations must be considered "valid" contributions to "tradition" not only when assessed in light of historical or theological criteria, but quite apart from these more "objective" factors. An adept's "authenticity" either personally or professionally acknowledged by teachers, students, peers or

others, defines a particular oral transmission as "traditional". Such an individualized concept of the "tradition" is derived from the status attributed to a Tantric guru or any "realized" adept. An adept's authority, rooted in the concept of being a living embodiment of the divine, means that each individual's understanding of tradition and personal experience constitutes "tradition" at least within the adept's lineage.

At another level internal oral "tradition" refers to a verbal transmission that interprets a source (or sources) beyond an individual adept's personal experiences or "creative understanding". This includes teachings received from a guru or other adepts within a given lineage as well as the transmitted interpretation of sources contributing to the lineage's tradition. A lineage's guru, whether historical or contemporary, defines teachings as "traditional" since his or her absolute authority within the lineage insures that verbally transmitted experiences (or interpretations of experiences) remain a part of the oral tradition. But a guru frequently draws upon a number of "external" sources beyond personal experiences, including scriptures (actually studied or otherwise identified), oral lore received or merely "heard" and other forms (or imagined forms) of practice. Thus orally maintained materials are considered "traditional" also when they exist in

transmissions with clearly identifiable historical relations. Gurus may not articulate the complex influences that affect their understanding of tradition, but they always make a point of locating themselves within an "historical" lineage.

Thus oral "tradition" necessarily extends beyond personalized perspectives insofar as it reflects currents, ideas or practices with historical or quasi-historical precedents. When a concept is documented in historical sources there is at least the possibility of comparing its presentation with the interpretations of contemporary oral traditions. The "tradition" is historically continuous when oral transmissions directly respond or are in some way influenced by other less ephemeral modes of communication, such as written or printed sources.

The degree to which oral (or even living) traditions' views "correspond" to written traditions might at first appear a relatively simple task were it not for the special role the oral/aural plays in Hindu Tantrism and, what might best be termed, inherent hermeneutical problems. Few written Tantric sources make much sense <u>without</u> some form of oral commentary or explanation which can only be obtained from a living source. Whether a given commentary is "correct" or even plausible depends on both the individual authenticity of the interpreter and the relationship of

historical continuity that interpreter establishes with the text or concept. While the scholar develops criteria to make these assessments, the Tantric disciple accepts both aspects as facts: the authentic adept (1) has been trained in a continuous tradition of interpretation that grants access to materials otherwise obscure or impenetrable and (2) is a locus of "spiritual authority" by virtue of personal practice. Thus whatever is said by the adept has an authenticity arising out of the adept's own personal practice as it is recognized by others.

It is clear to the observer that a "tradition" exists in the sense of a continuity with the past only when some historical, theoretical or practical relationship is orally established and demonstrated or documented through texts, records, epigraphy or some other form of tangible evidence. Whether a particular interpretation that is transmitted as "tradition" is "correct" depends on the perspective of the person receiving it: the adept within a lineage receiving "traditional" materials accepts "received" interpretations usually at face-value as authentic and essentially "true": only the scholar or a member of another lineage questions the veracity of such transmissions. If there is an immediate relationship between an adept and a guru providing oral transmission then even the most blatant contradictions between text and oral interpretation or between tradition

and history may be overlooked since the guru has an absolute authority over the meaning of scripture and a power to determine what is scriptural or relevant to a particular disciple or lineage. As immediacy in transmission breaks down over a period of generations, documented material or a lineage's practice is once again open to revision. (The issue of "immediacy" of authority has been made elsewhere.)

Thus there are at least two distinct types of internal oral tradition evident in Hindu Tantrism, namely, (1) one that explicitly links itself in some way with the interpretation of historically documented, "external" materials and (2) another that affirms and accepts the creative input of individual participants as direct, "internal" sources of tradition and authority. In the first type there is a self-conscious and deliberate effort to create a relationship with the past, while in the second an ordinary historical relationship, however discernable, is not the primary source of authoritativeness. Thus in personal accounts of adepts--what some may take as "made up" interpretations lacking historical sources of verification--authority originates in the direct experience of the adept and in the perception of others who deem oral transmissions based on these accounts as authentic.

However one chooses to distinguish the two types of oral tradition they are not necessarily represented by two

different elements within Śrīvidyā tradition. While there are gurus incapable of making accurate or even clear historical connections, they may have a significant impact on the development of a lineage tradition. The "sastric knowledge" or the scholastic prowess of a guru is rarely, if ever, a leading criteria for adepts' judgments of authenticity. The emphasis rather is on the guru as an exemplary model of the tradition's virtues and spiritual ideals. The stamp left on a particular interpretation is not meant to be an individual signature (since this would violate the ideal of "egoless" behavior) but because power is vested in individual gurus with strong personal identities, individualized interpretations profoundly affect the content of historical oral traditions. The individual adept who effectively "creates" tradition without known or documented historical precedents obviously has not been exempt from the written and historical tradition's influences. Furthermore, the adept has acquired authority through an initiation that clearly links him to an "historical" lineage with divine origins. Determining the "validity" of an oral tradition becomes problematic only when the observer wishes to distinguish specific interpretations as being of one type or the other, that is, as either essentially personal "creations" or historically continuous views.

By relating these two types of oral communication considered "tradition" to written tradition we are brought back to Goody's central point. Not only does the shift to a "written" tradition affect the transmission of Tantric teachings by abstracting ideas which can (and do) stand apart from ultimately authoritative spoken words, oral interpretations are no less dramatically altered by changing modes of written communication. Once privately distributed and hand copied, written Tantric sources in printed editions have changed not only in form but in content. This shift in mode of transmission resulted not so much from the influence of encroaching science but from increasing social and intellectual pressures on traditional India, and particularly from elements anxious to bring to light India's historical and religious heritage. These influences, some of which must be attributed to foreigners, precipitated the development of manuscript libraries and increasing public accessibility.

As hand copied sources are edited and committed to print they are subject to different sets of criteria for determining content. How a traditional adept edits (and particularly determines interpolations within) a written source as it appears within a lineage may be significantly different than its treatment by a scholar, even when that scholar is an initiate. Thus an adept in the process of

editing a text may alter it to suit the ideology of his lineage while a scholar may develop criteria to determine which manuscript readings represent the most "coherent" and "consistent" versions of the text. A major effect of print technology on Tantric tradition has been the possibility of non-initiates gaining access to previously "secret" information.

As noted earlier, handwritten manuscripts of Tantric sources are increasingly rare in contemporary India as adepts come to depend on the printed word. It is precisely this shift from handwritten to printed texts, a transition of technology accompanied by a more open enquiry into religious and historical traditions, that has contributed most dramatically to changes in the contemporary Srividya tradition's understanding of scripture and the authority of written traditions. Hand copied texts passed within lineages possess authority arising from the guru's personal responsibility for content; an authority that printed texts may lack. "Selective" reading, the process by which adepts choose to include and exclude materials within a single source, arises at least in part from this disassociation of adepts and lineages with a work's printed contents.

When early texts were committed to writing from originally oral forms they retained a direct relationship to the structures of authority within the tradition because

they could not be separated, at least initially, from the people who copied and owned them. This was true so long as the texts passed through the hands of qualified teachers. Teachers did not separate themselves from the content of handwritten works which they at least to some degree controlled. As written texts gradually acquired more established, fixed forms, the interpretive oral tradition still maintained a relationship that provided an effective check on the content if not on the volume or form of a particular text. But with the shift to print technology, texts left the hands of the orally oriented traditionalists initially responsible for their transmission and emerged in forms no longer acceptable to particular lineages. While the printing of secret or private texts did not create the "selective" reading that emerged with established written forms (since this would have occurred anyway on ideological grounds), neither did it create an emerging sense of authority for the printed word. In fact, it seems printed texts have not become more authoritative sources of tradition (as they may be for scholarship) but less authoritative since they abstract material one step further from the most immediate center of authentic authority, that is, from the individual adept interpreters within lineages.

Modern Śrīvidyā adepts have responded to the shift in presentation from handwritten to printed forms by

developing new approaches to the concept of scripture. The usual result is either "acceptance" of only limited portions of a given text or a hierarchical ranking of concepts within sources. But perhaps this increasing abstractness and lessening control over the content of "classical" texts also accounts, at least to some extent, for the greater emphasis contemporary lineages place on their own paddhatis: texts over which they have a complete control and a sense of historical continuity as arbiters of traditional authority.

In whatever form the paddhatis take--handwritten, privately printed or sometimes publicly available--the links between oral and written forms are direct and the source of authority more immediate. Not only have materials other than paddhatis gradually lost influence in contemporary oral traditions as manuscripts are replaced by printed texts but the maintenance of oral interpretations surrounding these materials have become less important. The overall effect is a gradual decline in the standards of instruction within lineage traditions. Committing texts to the more permanent medium of print has not necessarily made it easier for adepts to transmit Śrīvidyā. Rather, historical sources sometimes become more difficult to accept at face-value because they lack the authority of having been passed in accepted lineages and, witn increasing dependence on printed materials, lineages are more dependent on the availability

of printed works. These conditions affect the tradition as economic and intellectual situations dictate what adepts may learn and what sources their lineages preserve.

Śrīvidyā as an oral and written tradition might best be viewed as series of intersecting (but not concentric) circles in which each individual and lineage forms a part of an interlacing series of interpretations. The resulting mosaic is one of diversity within the parameters of an historical tradition very much in a dynamic process of self-understanding and reevaluation. The image is evocative of the śrīcakra itself.

C. Śrīvidyā as a School of Śāktism: Hierarchy and Privilege

Śrīvidyā has usually responded to other forms and traditions of Hindu worship tolerantly. Rather than reject outright other forms of worship as inappropriate or inadequate, Śrīvidyā adepts affirm their own superiority by creating hierarchies of religious possibilities; hierarchies of their own making. The tradition has retained its continuity by interpreting religious experiences and practices as reflections of varying degrees of knowledge and by categorizing and ranking views. This process is centered within lineages though there are historical sources which apparently reflect regional views and present established schemes.[5]

Śrīvidyā, like the other essentially private and initiated Tantric sects, is identified not merely through scriptures or doctrines but through the individuals and lineages that link themselves to its distinctive synthesis of concepts. There are two important considerations for understanding Śrīvidyā both as a Tantric sect and as an historically influential school of Śākta Hinduism: (1) Its continuity and influence is not a product of abstract formulations of doctrine or imagery but rests upon the enduring faith of its adherents; and (2) these adherents have developed its identity not by emphasizing "new" concepts but by fusing elements of existing historical traditions into a unique synthesis. To be sure, certain elements within Śrīvidyā, such as the śrīcakra and śrīvidyā, are uniquely its own though these components too belong to a more general, continuous tradition of yantras and mantras that goes beyond sectarian identities or even specifically Tantric formulations. As we have observed also, individuals may "follow" or "practice" Śrīvidyā without making an exclusive commitment. Such important historical figures as Maheśvarānanda elicit a strong interest in other forms of Tantric discipline (sādhana). Precisely how these individuals "rank" or consider Śrīvidyā in relation to their other interests or practices is not always clear. Contemporary adepts, at least those I encountered in south

India, continue to follow a general pattern: some initiated adepts practice other forms of spiritual discipline in addition to Śrīvidyā and some, but not all, are willing to create an implicit or stated "hierarchy" of theological possibilities.

Regarding the ways in which Śrīvidyā as a school of Tantrism transcends the boundaries distinguishing ancient Vedism from classical Hinduism, we have already observed the role and interpretation of mantras as ritual elements in the salvific process. Śrīvidyā, like other Tantric sects, in this way retains or harkens back to features more characteristic of Vedic traditions than other groups belonging to the classical Hinduism. Tantric mantras like Vedic mantras retain magical and almost mechanical qualities; effects result from the mantra's intrinsic value coupled with the empowerment of qualified use. The ritual power of mantras extends over both natural and social events at historical and transhistorical levels. At the same time the role of mantras in the salvific process is deemed crucial. To be initiated into the root mantra (mūlamantra), according to Śrīvidyā tradition, is not merely to acquire a successful means of accomplishing the four aims of life (puruṣārthas) but, in some way, to have already accomplished them. Put differently, the śrīvidyā is not merely knowledge (vidyā) about the key to liberation and worldly prosperity

but in some sense constitutes these aims. For the adept, knowing the mantra (vidyā) is possessing knowledge (vidyā); it is, as it were, a direct channel to the Absolute (brahman) since the mantra is itself the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) of the deity and thus is identical to Brahman.

E. Reason, Liberation and Prosperity

Given the strong emphasis on ritual practice and multivalent symbols (i.e., images, mantras and yantras), at what point in Śrīvidyā tradition is rational enquiry subordinated to the experiences these actions and symbols are meant to provide?

Despite years devoted to developing ritual and theoretical interpretations, Śrīvidyā adepts rely neither upon ritual nor rational, theological understanding per se to gain material and spiritual goals. Neither do they appear particularly interested in describing the process of personalizing these symbols, rituals and rational investigations. Descriptions of final liberation are rare in primary scriptural sources and of secondary importance in the oral transmission of the tradition. The liberative experience is considered a profoundly personal and seemingly unmistakable encounter with Truth. Therefore Śrīvidyā's theologians emphasize the need to perfect the process rather

than explain the content of the final goal. If the process of liberation, including the tradition's elaborate ritual and theological elements, is carried to its conclusion then the goal will not be misconstrued---at least this is the implication of adepts. Thus it is common also to find Śrīvidyā adepts with little interest in the intricacies of theology or ritual symbolism, preferring to concentrate on ritual or meditative practice itself.

One of the consequences of this self-fulfilling interpretation of liberation has been that ritual performance and symbolic content lead many adepts to concentrate almost exclusively on these elements. Ritual and theological speculation appear to become ends in themselves when, in fact, the majority within the tradition condemn such interpretations. While ritual practices are not viewed as solely responsible for spiritual realization neither can they be considered utterly distinct "means" disassociated from an "end". To view ritual as merely a "means" would be to separate it or consider it "different" than the goal: this position too must be unacceptable in a theology whose stated goal is to dissolve the differences between ordinary existence and Absolute reality. All forms of symbolism, ritual and practice are intended to lead the conclusion that the very process of discrimination dissolves distinctions, including those involving "means" and "ends"

disappear. However paradoxical the method may seem, the purpose of creating an elaborate network of symbols is to transcend the appearance of differences.

For the majority of Śrīvidyā adepts the performance of the _śrīcakra pūjā_, sometimes after years of extensive instruction into its meanings, is not an exercise preoccupied with unravelling symbolism. As one adept succinctly put it:

> I am not thinking of all the meanings of the cakra when I meditate upon it, or all the meanings of the mantra when I repeat it. It is not an intellectual experience but a spiritual one---but neither do the intellectual aspects of the discipline completely cease when the _pūjā_ begins... learning and ritual practices are what lead us to a more complete understanding... it is like sowing [rice] paddy: the ground has been turned, the seedlings planted and nurtured by the rains and now the sun's light begins to take its effect.[6]

For the adept, simply to practice the ritual is in some way to attain its aims while the whole spiritual practice is itself rooted deeply in traditions of symbolic interpretation, regimented habit and a belief in gradual realization.

F. Initiation and Faith

As part of the Tantric tradition, the central defining

act of commitment to Śrīvidyā is initiation (<u>dīkṣā</u>). This commitment is not merely a matter of submitting to certain structures of authority or accepting certain beliefs, it is an act of faith, an act of the heart and mind.[7]

Formal initiation makes demands on the individual to adhere to certain structured norms of behavior and to accept certain patterns of authority. But <u>dīkṣā</u> also represents the opening of new possibilities: initiation is not intended to bind the adept but to serve as the first creative act of a life transformed by religious commitment. The guru is, of course, the key figure in this process and continues to act as the guiding force behind the adept's discipline even when physically absent. Initiation is the first act of commitment to a spiritual discipline that implies sacrifice, the relinquishing of lower aims for higher ones, and a submission and obedience intended to foster greater personal growth and stability. Thus initiation is not a single, isolated ritual but an event the adept carries through life; it effects the transition from mundane to spiritual life as every form of action becomes motivated by a sense of religious purpose. The adept no longer lives simply for himself, his family or his community but as a spiritually endowed person with a broader, albeit a sometimes "secret", social responsibility. By initiation and commitment to Srividya the adept believes he has gained access to the very

substance of divinity in the forms of mantra and yantra. This theological position necessarily implies social and ethical values and sometimes has unfortunate consequences. For example, unequivocal reliance on the guru has led some adepts to maintain positions that they might not otherwise feel so strongly compelled to defend and further suggests the potential for abuse by charlatans.[8]

G. Śrīvidyā, Tantrism and the History of Indian Religions

Literary, historical and theological forms of analysis demonstrate conclusively that Śrīvidyā is a school of Sakta Tantrism but do little to place it within the mainstreams of Indian religions. While Śrīvidyā, and by analogy other Tantric sects, appear to retain certain elements of ancient Vedism no longer obvious to the classical Hindu period, this point must not be made at the expense of understanding Śrīvidyā as "outside" the currents of classical Hindu theology and practice. In fact, it can be argued that Śrīvidyā (and perhaps Hindu Tantrism as a whole) includes virtually all the major thematic issues of theory and practice present in classical Hindu tradition. A few major points of convergence between Tantrism and mainstream classical Hinduism begin to bring the issue to light.

(1) The concept of darśan and the significance of visual imagery, perhaps the most dominant theme in all Hindu

worship, popular or esoteric, is everywhere present in the Tantric tradition.[9] When the Śrīvidyā adept visualizes or comes into contact with the śrīcakra he does not imagine a representational metaphor for the structure of reality or for the union of Śiva and Śakti but the actual transcendent form of reality itself. For the Śrīvidyā adept, the image of the cakra, like the image of a deity, is infused with power and significance through ritual, iconographic symbolism and in the reciprocal relationship of devotion (bhakti) that underlies the Hindu's human/divine encounter. When the śrīcakra is established with this "life force" (i.e., undergone prāṇapratiṣṭha either permanently or temporarily) it is not merely a representation or symbol of god but a manifestation of divine power. It is not merely the image per se that gives shape to divinity but the image when established in appropriate ritual and theological relationships; divine power assumes these given forms both of its own accord (or out of divine "play") and for the sake of establishing a human relationship.

Thus the śrīcakra is not an accidental or humanly imagined configuration but the form that divinity has chosen to assume as the primordial, underlying structure of the universe. When infused with the presence of divinity the cakra's material configuration, as it appears on paper or metal, becomes an appropriate locus for the "concentrated"

presence of the Absolute. Each śrīcakra as a depiction of the divine's underlying "shape" becomes a center of divine power when ritually worshipped and, in the ritual process, a center of the universe located within the ordinary world. It is through this ritual transformation, this essentially human act in coordination with the divine power and form, that every adept locates himself in the universe as an essential ingredient, not merely an accidental or mere karmic occurrence. When a Śrīvidyā adept sits ritually before the śrīcakra and has its darśan, he or she encounters the divine, shares in its presence and begins the gradual process of dissolving the differences that separate one from the other. The initial point of conceptual departure---the theoretical identity of body and soul with the yantra serving as the configuration of the universe---also becomes the final goal of religious experience. In this non-dualist tradition, adepts affirm the distinction between subject and object (in this case between human and divine) through darśan in order to dismantle distinctions between human and divine natures. The ritual's aim is not to affirm a sacred space occupied by the śrīcakra in order to distinguish its "sacrality" from the "profane" ordinary world but to affect a transformation in understanding concerning the everyday world by identifying it as structured through the cakra's form.

One might suggest that the worship of the *śrīcakra* (*vis a vis* theological speculations about it) does not reenact the creation of the universe because, like many Hindus, Śrīvidyā adepts are interested in creation only as an accomplished fact. (Note also Hindu's present theological indifference to the god Brahma.) While the question of how creation takes place is of obvious importance to Śrīvidyā because of the particular shape the universe assumes, creation *per se* is a matter for theology and not necessarily crucial to a ritual practice that begins with creation (and its underlying form, i.e., the *śrīcakra*) as an already accomplished fact. Liberation is a return to the source of creation achieved by means of a systematic ritual deconstruction that traces the universe's material evolution (*prakṛti*) to its single spiritual (*puruṣa*) source.[10] According to adepts this "deconstructive method" (ritually visible in the *samhāra krama* mode of worship), however, does not "dissolve" the material universe or disprove its existence but merely removes the "false" distinctions that separate humanity from its divine source. While the ritual method is "negative" insofar as it "destroys" (*samhāra*) the distinctions of subject and object, its ultimate aim is to affirm reality and the possibility of human perfection. Srividya adepts continually emphasize that the experience of non-duality is an unqualified bliss (*ānanda*); it does not

occur on some "other" plane of existence but _in_ the seemingly ordinary world. (Like the Śaṅkarite _kevalādvaitins_, Śrīvidyā affirms the possibility of embodied liberation (_jīvanmukti_).) The act of _darśan_ and ritual practice is intended to affirm creation by dissolving its appearances, not by rejecting its substantiality or fundamental divinity.

(2) Śrīvidyā's discipline is described as frequently as a sacrifice, _yajna_ or _yaga_, as it is as _sādhana_, a means of accomplishing stated goals. As we have observed, the external forms of sacrifice, the _bahiryāgas_, are similar in form to the Vedic rites carried into the mainstreams of classical Hindu practice. Tantrics, following in the footsteps of earlier Hindus, emphasize meaning and symbolism and thereby reinfuse power into otherwise superficial ritual actions; or to put it in terms familiar to Śrīvidyā, they transform external rites into internal acts of identifications, that is, acts of _bahiryāga_ into _antaryāga_.

While the Samayācārins are perhaps best noted for the _antaryāga_ concept, all of Śrīvidyā, including its Kaula branches, have laid stress on this point. The process, one might conclude, is not significantly different in intent from that of the authors of the _Āraṇyakas_ and the early Upaniṣads. Just as medieval Tantrics increasingly stress the subordination of ritual _actions_ (_kriyā_ or _karma_) to

knowledge (jñāna) and intentions, we observe a similar shift in emphasis earlier at the juncture of the ritualistic Brāhmaṇas and the early Upaniṣads. But unlike Śaṅkara and the *kevalādvaitins* who discredit the liberative power of ritual action in favor of pure insight (*jñāna*), Śākta Tantrics, like those within Śrīvidyā, incorporate both elements. Śāktas stress "knowledge" (*jñāna*) without forsaking action (*karma*) and also retain certain "pre-classical" Hindu values concerning the usefulness of mantras and role of ritual in the salvific process. Tantric ritual sacrifice, be it external or internal, serves a dual purpose as it does in Vedic and some classical non-Tantric Hindu practices such as the *Mīmāṃsaka* schools: it is directed not merely towards liberation but includes a power to affect natural and social events.

The majority of Śrīvidyā worshippers, despite historical connections with the Śaṅkara tradition, do not forsake the worldly life for one of renunciation, nor do they reject the value of ritual actions for obtaining liberation. Rather, they stress the importance of fulfilling the prescriptions of *varṇāśramadharma* by completing each stage of the life cycle and satisfying the aims of human life (*puruṣārthas*).

In this way Śākta Tantrics bear a closer resemblance to *bhedābhedādvaitins* such as Bhāskara the Vedāntin who, it

would appear, actually reflect the majority position of classical Hinduism in the late medieval period. This acceptance of a combination of action and knowledge for achieving liberation, the so-called sammucayavāda, also seems more in consonance with the views of the Bhagavadgītā, a text that by this late period is a pillar of Hindu orthodoxy. To less fervently ascetical and more worldly conscious theologians such as Bhāskara, the orderly progression of life through castes and stages (varṇāśramadharma) must not be interrupted---a view shared by most Tantrics and certainly the vast majority of historical and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts.

(3) As we have observed, Śākta Advaitism differs in important ways from the kevalādvaita of Śaṅkara especially in its preference for the sammucayavada and by its rather conventional approach to varṇāśramadharma. Much is made of the "abandoning" of caste among Tantrics but this too, as it appears from the evidence of the present study, is overstated if not entirely false. Just as Śaṅkara, despite his "leap" to the sannyāsin stage, did not disrespect the conventions of the Hindu social order, so caste and gender have not been forsaken among Tantrics as important criteria in the assessment of spiritual qualification; rather it appears that other considerations are made preeminent without abandoning concepts of varṇa and āśrama. As it so

happens, the majority of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts in south India assume a position not unlike that of the historical Śaṅkara: theoretically anyone meeting certain standards (such as those set forth in the so-called <u>catuṣṭhaya sādhana</u>) is qualified for spiritual discipline while in reality only male Brahmins seem to meet these requirements. Śrīvidyā lineages in contemporary south India do not all assert this position since women are sometimes admitted as adepts, but the majority have retained these fundamental patterns of belief and practice. In lineages that, for one reason or another, do not accept women initiates, the situation conforms even more closely with the "Vedic" tradition in which women were excluded from hearing scriptures or from partaking in all but exceptional sacrifices.

There is at least one obvious reason for caste discrimination within Tantric lineages that disavow its legitimacy: caste considerations do not simply disappear with initiation, especially within groups as rooted in certain social values, such as marriage and commensality, as south Indian <u>smārta</u> Brahmins. Lineages that admit members across caste lines, as we have seen, invariably make adjustments and distinctions regarding social and religious qualifications and actions.

The point is not simply that caste and gender continue

to matter to Tantrics but that a reevaluation of religious qualifications that places criteria other than caste and gender into the forefront is also not unique to Tantric traditions. Precedents are found even as far back as the period of the early Upaniṣads, such as the famous instruction given by Yajñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī (cf., Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.1f. and 4.5f.).

(4) The Tantric synthesis of concepts and values incorporating ritual and moral action (both included under the general heading of karma), meditative yoga (discussed under a variety of terms including dhyāna, bhāvanā and even japa), knowledge (jñāna) and the necessity of loving devotion (bhakti) to both divinity and teacher---what in general terms is seen to be the very heart of Tantric sādhana---is certainly not the least bit unique to Tantrism. One might be so bold as to suggest that Tantrics have learned the lessons of the Bhagavadgītā more convincingly than non-Tantric kevavāivaitins such as Śaṅkara or even the ritual-oriented Mīmāṃasakas. Each of these schools emphasizes one concept over the others, placing knowledge above ritual and devotion (as do the kevelādvaitins) or the liberative value of ritual over knowledge (as do certain Mīmāṃsakas). While there are others who claim a balanced or synthetic approach (all, including Rāmanuja, firmly within the "Vedic" fold), perhaps none have so deliberately brought

all of the Gītā's teachings together as have Tantrics. A more detailed examination of the deliberate appropriation of mainstream Hindu elements may prove significant for future Tantric studies especially with regard to its acceptance and practice within high-caste circles.

Śrīvidyā provides an example of how such mainstream elements are systematized into a coherent body of thought---coherent, but not without dichotomy and even conflict. Like Arjuna at the outset of Chapter Three of the Bhagavadgītā, many Śrīvidyā adepts are confronted with the dilemma of which alternative discipline is superior and which is considered superior within the tradition. Are the conflicts of knowledge and action or devotion and action real or apparent? Is the solution to emphasize one yoga over the others (the tactic favored by other advaitins such as Śaṅkara) or to work towards a synthesis even at the expense of a rigorously consistent rational? Just as action (karma) and knowledge (jñāna) are not considered logically inconsistent, likewise Śrīvidyā adepts historically and in the contemporary tradition do not view the yogas of the Bhagavadgītā as conflicting. Instead they prefer to combine and distinguish each as part of a whole discipline without considering one in opposition to another. Contradiction is transcended not by ignoring the seeming paradox but by generating levels of understanding and a hierarchy of

practice that allows, in the very least, a continuity of appearances between the lowest and highest positions. As a senior member of "Guru" Mandali put it:

> The ritual does not seem to differ much between the senior adepts and the younger disciples, the ritual action (karma) provides discipline and [makes use of] the mantras [to] bring about effects. No one, no matter how senior [an adept], abandons these practices or suggests to another that he is no longer in need of them. One may not be in need of them, but because they provide examples and serve to encourage the maintenance of the discipline they should continue. It is not our duty to confuse people about the spiritual path but to direct them. Not everyone can understand what is taught at the highest level, so there are many avenues of approach. But there certainly is a difference between those with more experience and those in earlier stages. For the experienced adept bhakti has been transformed into jñāna, as has the ritual---everything becomes, for us, a form of jñāna though we can still call one bhakti and the other karma. This is the real secret of Śrīvidyā sādhana; there is no conflict between these parts because all of them are actually aspects of the same thing, knowledge. But the inexperienced adept does not always see these things. For example, he speaks of the grace of God, as we do, but means something different than what we mean because for him God is something entirely different than himself. Even an experienced adept sometimes feels his own smallness in relation to God, and then he speaks of the need for God's grace and of his dependence on devotion. What we should understand is that all of these differences are made in order to see that there is no difference at all between ourselves and the [ultimately real] Brahman. There are many kinds of understanding and even the same person at different times feels himself at different levels of understanding.[11]

The incorporation of bhakti, karma, yoga/dhyāna and jñāna into Tantric discipline can also be seen in terms of

Śrīvidyā's three (or four) sided approach to liberation, namely, through (1) self effort which includes the physical yoga and mental dhyāna component as well as the acquisition of jñāna; (2) grace, developed on the basis of a bhakti oriented relationship with God; and (3) magic or supernaturalism, linked to performance of certain rituals and mantras and hence exhibiting a more fundamental notion of karma as ritually efficacious. Seen in these terms, Śrīvidyā's discipline not only exemplifies the synthetic qualities of the Bhagavadgītā but exhibits several generic categories of understanding liberation or salvation within the history of religions.

Thus individual self-effort, for example, deemed necessary in the quest for salvation may be relatively unimportant in a tradition emphasizing grace; Śrīvidyā, however, incorporates aspects of all three, self-effort, grace and magic, by subsuming or subordinating varieties of religious practice under the category of knowledge (jñāna). This tendency to view devotion or ritual as prerequisite to knowledge, we might add, is characteristic of all Indian non-dualists, Hindu or otherwise. In this respect Śrīvidyā is similar to Śaṅkara but unlike the kevelādvaitin committed to a logic based on the incompatibility of action and knowledge, the Śākta non-dualist accepts as inherently paradoxical the rational analysis of "dualistic" discourse.

H. Final Remarks

The present study only begins to consider the relationship of Tantrism to other forms of Indian religion and to investigate the various levels and types of worship that occur within Hindu Śākta tradition. Rather than attempt to formulate a conclusive definition of Tantrism it offers a case study of a sect that has grappled with Tantrism's principal concepts and values in ways that lead one to question the value of definitions too broad or too inclusive. Certainly this study's emphasis has been the points of convergence between Tantrism and non-Tantric Hinduism, but this can be attributed more to the sect under consideration than to the regional approach assumed as necessary for understanding Tantric tradition.

One is not led to the conclusion that the term "Tantra" lacks meaning either in contemporary India or as an historical description but that its use is no less controversial today than it has been in the past. Many intellectual Hindus, despite strong opinions and clearly defined sectarian identities, eschew simple categories and distrust the application of names without qualification. To ask a member of the Śrīvidyā tradition, "What is Tantra?" or "What is Śrīvidyā?", is to raise serious issues concerning

not only his or her religious practice but, in essence, to confront the whole meaning and quality of life. Like all people committed to a religious faith, Śrīvidyā adepts exemplify the fact that to lead the religious life is no different than live life in search of meaning.

* * * * * * * *

1. I do not believe my involvement with the tradition has hindered or significantly prejudiced these studies, and while it may potentially augment a critical appreciation of adepts' experiences, I do not mean to suggest either that I have been a purely "objective" observer. One might suggest that what is most fascinating about Śrīvidyā, or any religious tradition, is not its "objective" facts but the interpretations of faith and belief arising both from within and outside the parameters of the tradition.

3. This fundamental issue in religious studies relates directly to the issue of why this study has been undertaken. The question has prompted serious self reflection though the study was certainly not undertaken deliberately for such a purpose. As Dr. Sundaramoorthy and I became acquainted with individuals as involved and committed as ourselves, we began to realize that we must come to terms with our dual role as scholars and religious participants. Not only did we need to develop a critical eye regarding our own and others' involvement to provide dispassionate and disinterested scholarship, but we also needed to consider the points of convergence between the scholarly endeavor and our involvement.

In conclusion, I have not treated my personal involvement as conflicting with scholarly enquiry but as a dichotomy inherent in the investigation. If the study succeeds in meeting the standards of Western academic scholarship to the same degree that it has provided an avenue for the further development of faith, then it has exceeded its initial aims. While it may never be possible to "know" the hearts and minds of other adepts as they "know" themselves, given the present state of scholarship <u>about</u> Tantrics, this study cannot help but expand upon the possibilities for a more appreciative understanding.

3. My own position as "cultural outsider" also has played a role in shaping the present study though I would not suggest that this is a necessary a component to undertaking research on an esoteric religious tradition in the same way access to oral sources must be. Needless to say, my particular situation presented advantages and disadvantages, especially when considering difficulties involving caste and social position in a tradition dominated in south India by Brahmins. Only on rare occasions did my not being of Brahmin birth work distinctly to my disadvantage and certainly it was often better to be culturally "outside" the Indian social system than in a position of being perceived

as a social inferior within it. For an example of this situation see the introductory remarks to Part Two.

4. Goody, Jack, The Domestication of the Savage Mind. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

5. Such as the rather convoluted regional division of traditions presented in the Śaktisaṃgamatantra. See HT, p.43ff.

6. A senior member of the "Gāyatrī" Mandali, Madras, December, 1984.

7. It is not insignificant, it seems to me, that the term hṛdaya in Sanskrit, refers to both the heart and the mind and one can argue that in traditional terms the two are not meant to be distinguished, that is, that the emotional and spiritual commitments of the "heart" should not be separated from rational and intellectual activities of the "mind".

8. One rather harmless but interesting example suggests the extent to which pious Hindus submit to centers of authority and especially to individual gurus. The senior Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāmākṣī Kāmakoṭi pītha in Kāñcipuram maintains that the Ādiśaṅkarācārya, that is, the author of the famous Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, etc., lived in the fifth century, B.C.E. or some 1200 years before the date decided upon by modern scholarship. This has discrepancy has put a number of contemporary Indian scholars of the smārta community in an unhappy position. Not wanting to seem impious or defiant of such a highly regarded and saintly figure, many feel compelled to argue for a position that they would not otherwise maintain; others simply refrain from stating an opinion in hopes of circumventing the appearance of conflict. What is a matter of historical enquiry has, in fact, become a highly sensitive and emotional issue. Furthermore, it demonstrates the degree to which religious authority can affect otherwise "scientific" fact and create a monopoly over good judgement and common sense.

9. On the concept of darśan see, Eck, Diana L., Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India. Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1981.

10. The obvious relationship to the Sāṅkhya system is evidenced here. Śāktas, in the process of utilizing similar notions, having offered a resolution to the fundamental difficulty in the Sāṅkhya system and retain the "appearances" of dualism. Precisely how and why the spiritual (puruṣa) and material (prakṛti) components are

"originally confused" and thus cause creation (according to the Sāṅkhyins) is not answered in ways that are particularly convincing to later Vedānta thinkers. Śāktas maintain that there is no confusion of two otherwise "unrelated" elements but a complimentary relationship that resolves in the two being fundamentally identical. Reality does assume the shape of dualism---dualistic reality is not a mere appearance---and the appearances are not "less real" than their source but rather identical to it at a more fundamental level. The only "confusion" that occurs is in the human mind that views itself as not belonging "fully" to the process. Śāktas generally assume the transformation of the One into many to be real, that is, they accept the so-called pariṇāmavāda, but they do not often posit this position as antithetical to the concepts that reality has merely appeared as dualistic (vivartavāda) or that it has actually not undergone any evolution (ajātivāda). They would object more vigorously to both of these latter positions if they did not maintain the position that holding one position over the other is a matter not of which is "true" but from which perspective one is viewing the Truth.

11. A senior member of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, June, 1985.

Introduction and Translation

of

The Tripurā Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Bhāskararāya

Appendix One

Appendix One
Introduction to the translation of the Tripurā Upaniṣadbhāṣya of Bhāskararāya

A. Remarks on the place of and date of Tripurā Upaniṣad within Śākta Tantrism

The Tripurā Upaniṣad belongs to a general group of texts with nebulous historical origins and often obscure theological content. Texts bearing the title "Upaniṣad", it would appear, continue to be written well into recent modern times with increasing attention given to sectarian concerns. Thus there exist "Upanisads" focusing on aspects of Śaiva, Sākta and Vaiṣṇava theology as well as a number on more abstract subjects such as Yoga or renunciation (sannyāsa). Among the Śākta-oriented "Upaniṣads", perhaps no other single text offers as wide a selection of topics within a specific sectarian context as the Tripurā Upaniṣad.

Tripurā Upaniṣad belongs not only to Śāktism but to Srīvidyā's Kaula Tantric school of interpretation. Despite its bearing the title "Upaniṣad" and thus deliberately identifying its content as "Vedic" in origin, the Upaniṣad's sixteen verses are Tantric in both content and style. The text's arcane and technical Tantric vocabulary is obfuscated by a deliberate appropriation of an archaic quasi-Vedic language.

Concerning the date of Tripurā Upaniṣad, we are extremely limited by the available evidence. Its "Vedic"

language and presentation may only serve to complicate rather than clarify the problem. References to either to individual verses or to the text itself do not appear before the fifteenth century. Kaivalyāśrama, a commentator on the Saundaryalaharī who is likely to post-date Lakṣmīdhara (c. 1500) but precede the eighteenth century Bhāskararāya, is perhaps the first to mention the text by name or cite its contents.[1] It is not until Bhāskararāya (c. 1730) and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin (fl. 1740, also known as Rāmacandrendra Sarasvatī) compose commentaries on the text as a unit that it is certain that the verses do, in fact, exist and are viewed as a single, coherent piece. The absence of any mention of individual verses or text by earlier commentators, including even those of likely south Indian origins, such as Śrīvidyānandanātha author of the Saubhāgyaratnākara, seems to indicate (1) that the verses were not yet composed, (2) that text as a unit was perhaps not yet compiled or (3) that its contents (either as verses or a single text) were kept deliberately secret. It is also possible that its "stray" verses were not considered particularly important or useful for explicating doctrine and thus were left out of historical commentaries.

It does seem likely that the individual verses of the text existed independently before being compiled in a single source, if only because of the disjointed presentation of

materials. From even a cursory reading it is clear that the Upaniṣad's compiler(s) intended the coherence of the material to depend more on sectarian theme and subject than on the development of issues in a series of logically consecutive verses. Historically, one can only conclude that the Upaniṣad as a composite source appears to be of relatively recent origins (perhaps post-fifteenth century or slightly later) but that its author(s)/compiler(s) intended it as both a synthetic presentation of a number of subjects central to the Śrīvidyā school and as a work bearing the qualities <u>and</u> authority of archaic Vedic literature.

Within Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā from at least the period of Bhāskararāya the text has, in fact, achieved the status of Vedic revelation and been regarded as bearing the archaisms of Upaniṣadic literature. Bhāskararāya treats its archaic language and epigrammatic presentation as indicative of its "ancient" Vedic origins and as suggestive of its being a poetic revelation transcending human attribution (i.e., considered as <u>apauruṣeya</u> <u>śrūti</u>). All subsequent Srividya tradition has considered <u>Tripurā</u> <u>Upaniṣad</u>, along with a number of others including the <u>Kaula</u>, <u>Bhāvanā</u>, <u>Āruna</u> and <u>Tripurātāpini</u> <u>Upaniṣads</u>, not only as authoritative "Tantras" but as revelation (<u>śrūti</u>) transmitted from ancient times. There is little doubt in the minds of historical commentators and contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts of the Kaula

branch of tradition (at least in south India) that the Tripurā and other Śākta Upaniṣads are considered ancient and entirely authoritative as "Vedic" sources.

B. Recensions of the Text, its Commentaries and its Importance in Historical and Contemporary Śrīvidyā

According to the commentators, the text itself seems to have been preserved in at least two recensions within two distinct branches (śākha) of Vedic tradition. Bhāskararāya notes that the text's existence in two forms and its explication in two traditions has led to differing opinions not only regarding terminology but interpretation. He makes his own position clear regarding his treatment of the text as belonging to the Ṛg Veda from the outset of his commentary but notes that different readings occur in its transmission within the Atharva Veda school. Bhāskararāya's specific placement of the Upanisad within a sub-branch of the Ṛg Vedic school does little to clarify its origins or transmission since his references are also obscure.[2] That the commentator Upaniṣadbrahmayogin also places the text within Ṛg and Atharva Veda branches only serves to confirm its transmission along two lines but does not further resolve variations within separate recensions.

The present translation is concerned primarily with Bhāskararāya's version of the primary text which, it would appear, is consistent in manuscripts including his comments.

While the traditional assignment of a "place" within the Vedic schools is less than clear, the version of the text favored by Bhāskararāya seems beyond dispute. The variations in the recensions of the primary text are noted only in passing in the notes to the translation, that is, as these differences in reading bring interpretive variations in the work of commentators other than Bhāskararāya. A brief mention should be made here of the existence of other commentaries before discussing in more detail the place of the text within Śrīvidyā and its importance to Bhāskararāya.

There are, in addition to Bhāskararāya's remarks, four other known historical commentaries on the Tripurā Upaniṣad. The commentary of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin that has already been mentioned is perhaps best known since editions and translations of the Upaniṣad based on this interpretation have been published by the Adyar Library in Madras.[3] While it is not known precisely when this prolific author penned his commentary on this and 108 other Upanisads, his interpretative insights are all the more remarkable if only because he is historically not considered to be either a Śākta by affiliation nor a Śrīvidyā adept. Within contemporary Śrīvidyā this commentary is regarded more with admiration for the ability of the author to penetrate the text's language and meaning than as a "Śrīvidyā" interpretation. Since Upaniṣadbrahmayogin spent the

majority of his career in Kāñcipuram and was a contemporary of Bhāskararāya, it seems also remarkable that Bhāskararāya makes no specific mention of either his specific work or his opinions. This may be due to Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's writing not strictly within Śrīvidyā tradition, that is, as a non-initiate interpreter. Nonetheless, one cannot help but marvel at the ability of the author to unravel the obscure language of the text and offer an interpretation that often concurs in substance with that of sectarian Śrīvidyā initiates.

The commentary attributed to the famous Vedānta philosopher Appayya Dīkṣita I (fl. 1585) must surely be spurious though it is not certain to which "Appayya Dikṣīta" the commentary should be assigned. In any case, the remarks amount to less than half a printed page of text and add little to the interpretation of the Upaniṣad. It would appear that a later devotee in the line of this prolific scholar thought it appropriate that he should have remarked on a text such as the _Tripurā Upaniṣad_ since comparable attributions are made regarding other Śākta Upanisads including the "sister" text of the _Tripurā Upaniṣad_, the _Bhāvanā Upaniṣad_.

The commentary attributed to one Gaṅgācarana Vedāntavagīśa is perhaps even more obscure than that of Appayya Dīkṣita. Having been edited and translated into

Bengali, the text appears to be of Bengali origins and is not known to exist in south India manuscript libraries nor is it known to any contemporary adepts with whom I had contact, either in north or south India.[4] I have had not the opportunity to view the commentary though it would appear by the list of other works attributed to this author that he too does not fall within the strict purview of initiated Śrīvidyā tradition. His obscurity especially in south India leads one to conclude that he has had no appreciable impact on the interpretation of Śrīvidyā in that region.

A commentary attributed to one Rāmānanda, also known as Rāmānandatīrtha or Vacaspati, is the subject of much confusion and dispute. The identification of the commentator on the Tripurā Upaniṣad with a Rāmānandatīrtha who flourished c.1650 should not be taken as a settled issue. The date, listed by Potter in his Bibliography edition of the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, assumes the attribution made by the compilers of the New Catalogus Catalogorum.[5] The author of this commentary and a comparable work on the Tripurātāpinī Upaniṣad not listed except in the Adyar Library in Madras I do not believe to be the Advaita philosopher named by Potter and other catalogue editors. The Tripurā Upaniṣad commentary which appears until this author's name has been edited recently in

Vārānasi but differs significantly in substance from the edition which I have acquired from the Adyar Library.[6] It may be the case that there are two authors bearing the name Rāmānanda who commented on the Upanisad but it is certain that the author of the Adyar Library version is also the author of the Tripurātāpini commentary in the same collection. While not openly identifying himself as a Samayācārin, the Adyar commentator frequently mentions Lakṣmīdhara as authoritative and assumes Samayācāra positions not unlike Lakṣmīdhara's. It is regarding the mention of the pañcamakāras and the practice of kāmakalādhyāna that the confusion ensues. Rāmānanda merely remarks that the use of these "prohibited substances" and the practice of the controversial form of meditation belong to a different set of qualifications others than those he deems appropriate for the Srīvidyā worshipper. He does not openly condemn these practices as does Lakṣmīdhara, nor does he take the position that they are appropriate only for low caste (śūdra) practitioners (another position assumed by Lakṣmīdhara). This ambiguity leads one to question Rāmānanda's precise affiliations. Perhaps more important for the present study is that contemporary adepts had no knowledge of commentaries on Tripurā Upaniṣad by this author until I brought it (or them) to their attention. If Rāmānanda is a southern author, a point made by a number of

adept/scholars after having reviewed the manuscripts and edition of the commentary, then he appears to have had little or no impact on subsequent historical tradition. The mention of Lakṣmīdhara (actually the "familiar" name "Lolla", an unambiguous reference to Lakṣmīdhara) would date Rāmānanda to the post-1500. Since the commentary lacks any mention of other opinions and Bhāskararāya makes no mention of either the commentary or its opinions, it is possible that it was composed before Bhāskararāya's and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's works but it still seems improbable that it originates from the hand of the Rāmānandatīrtha of the mid-seventeenth century.

Bhāskararāya's is not only the best known commentary on Upaniṣad but a work bearing the marks of his mature scholarship. While his own date and the date of certain of his works, such as the commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma and the Setubandha on the VT, are fixed, the date of this commentary and the commentaries on Bhāvanā and Kaula Upaniṣads is not as precise.[7] While he mentions himself that the LSN commentary was completed in Samvat 1728 (1728, C.E.), the Setubandha on the VT in Śaka 1655 (1733, C.E. or perhaps, 1741 C.E.) and the Guptavatī on Durgāsaptaśatī in Samvat 1797 (1740, C.E.), he gives no firm indication of the precise completion date of his Upaniṣad commentaries nor does he suggest why these particular Śākta Upaniṣads were

selected for commentary. However, since he mentions these and other works within the Upaniṣad commentaries we can safely establish that they were composed in the mature period of his literary career, sometime after 1741, C.E.. He often mentions that ideas presented in the Upanisad commentary are taken up in detail elsewhere in his works and that the reader must assume these as familiar positions. Without his own remarks on his choice of texts one is only can only look to contemporary oral traditions for explanation. That he chooses the Tripurā over the Tripurātāpini Upaniṣad is perhaps the most remarkable fact since the latter takes up similar issues, especially regarding the śrīvidyā in much greater detail. In the words of one adept:

> It is most remarkable that Bhāskara[rāya] chooses the Tripurā (Upaniṣad) since one would suspect that if his interest is an exposition of external sacrifice (bahiryāga) as opposed to the internal sacrifice (antaryāga) taken up in the Bhāvanā Upanisad then the Tripurātāpini would have been the more logical choice. We can only assume that this Upaniṣad was important to his lineage since he views it as a companion to the PKS as he says at the conclusion and that the Tripurātāpini was not considered in that way.[8]

The adept cited above is quite correct in understanding that Bhāskararāya viewed the two Upaniṣads as dealing with different types of Śrīvidyā practice and interpretation as well as that the Tripurā Upaniṣad is consider the complement to the PKS. Precisely why Bhāskararāya took these positions

is less clear. The Tripurā Upaniṣad is not a ritual text per se especially when compared to the rather practically oriented PKS and its ritual handbook format. The material within the text may be taken both as "external" ritual and as presenting theoretical doctrine. That Bhāskararāya considered it primarily "external" oriented ritual (bahiryāga) may be due not only to its content but to a tradition concerning the use of the Upanisad. Tripurā and a number of other Upaniṣads, including Bhāvanā, are recited as devotionals and for their mantric value by contemporary adepts. Thus not only can the subject matter of the text be interpreted as dealing with external ritual (bahiryāga) but the text itself is frequently appropriated as a part of external forms of practice. It is not impossible (however speculative) to conclude that Bhāskararāya also had a tradition of the recitation of the Upaniṣad in mind when he remarked that it is a ritual companion to the PKS, however directed his comments seem to be towards the content of the text rather than its ritual use. It seems most likely that Bhāskararāya's choice of this Upaniṣad was to contrast its external ritual orientation to that of the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad and to place it in relationship with the PKS in some rather obscure way as a companion volume. The relationship of this commentary to his Kaula Upaniṣadbhāṣya is not stated and one can only conclude that his choice in this respect was to

identify his own interpretations of Śrīvidyā with Kaula oriented Śākta Tantrism.

When taken without commentary, the Tripurā Upaniṣad is mysterious at best and utterly incomprehensible at worst. Within contemporary Śrīvidyā, the Tripurā Upaniṣad's appeal has not been limited to Kaula influenced Śrīvidyā adepts (with Rāmānanda as an historical example as well as its importance to so-called Samaya oriented contemporary lineages). In fact, because the Upanisad is considered a part of the Vedic tradition, both ancient and authoritative as revelation (śruti) it has only gained in importance among those lineages which interpret Śrīvidyā as a fulfillment of Vedic tradition or as not "Tantric" in origin or ethos. Thus it is a significant work not only for those lineages claiming continuity with Bhāskararāya but even for more conservative, Samaya oriented lineages that interpret Śrīvidyā as "Vaidika" rather than "Tantrika". Regardless of its origins and, to some extent, its Kaula content (including the pañcamakāras and kāmakalādhyāna), the Tripurā Upaniṣad along with the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad has obtained a place of increasing importance in south Indian Śrīvidyā across the spectrum of interpretations from the period of Bhāskararāya.

While the shifting of subjects within the verses makes for a less coherent presentation and structuring of ideas

than is evident in other comparable sources, it also provides an opportunity for an adept as skillful as Bhāskararāya to summarize his views on a number of issues important to Śrīvidyā and Śākta Tantrism as a whole. In a similar way it present the outside observer with the opportunity to view Śrīvidyā within the Śākta Tantric tradition and to examine the positions of one of its leading proponents on a broad range of issues. As noted earlier, the Upaniṣad is not an introduction to Śākta Tantrism nor to Śrīvidyā, but it is an important source for the interpretation of a number of seminal concepts in both historical and contemporary contexts. Unlike the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad which focuses on the more narrow topic of the microcosm/macrocosm interpretation of the śrīcakra or even Bhāskararāya's VVR which centers on the śrīvidyā in its esoteric dimensions, the Tripurā Upaniṣad raises both issues and presents the opportunity to consider a general rather a specific or technical interpretation. The Upaniṣad with Bhāskararāya's commentary has the added virtue of never before having been translated into a European or vernacular Indian language.

C. Structure of the Verses of the Tripurā Upaniṣad

Viewing the Tripurā Upaniṣad as a single, coherent work requires not only complex rationalization but an effort of the imagination. The relationship between verses is hardly self-evident and to impose a structure on the whole of the text is not an exercise deemed of particular value by either historical or contemporary adepts. Śrīvidyā traditionalists have been content to attribute the text's disjointed presentation to its being an archaic, poetic revelation and have not generally considered its inner structure. Tripurā Upaniṣad in this respect, however, does differ significantly from the Bhāvanā Upaniṣad and it is a point that Bhāskararāya notes implicitly by his consideration of the latter as a deliberate and orderly series of ideas. This is not to say that Tripurā Upaniṣad lacks thematic continuity but only that its conceptual structure does not depend on a specific order of presentation. One could conceivably picture the verses of the text in a different order though manuscripts do not offer such variations.

Verses one through five assert the supremacy of the goddess Lalitā Tripura[sundarī] by identifying her with śrīcakra and the yantra as the form of the expansion (prapañca) of the universe. According to Bhāskararāya and the other commentators, each portion of the śrīcakra, from its inner core to its outer gateways, is placed in

relationship with goddess as she manifests herself in the form of the universe. Verse six may be viewed as either shifting subjects or, in a sense, summarizing the previous five verses inasmuch as it identifies Lalitā as the supreme goddess---and hence another name for Tripurā---and maintains she is worshipped (in the form of the _śrīcakra_? or in places considered parts of a geographical _śrīcakra_?) at in certain key centers. Verse seven shifts subjects once again by turning towards the way in which the goddess of the _śrīcakra_ is worshipped by the use of wine. The verse would seem more appropriately placed after verse twelve which lists the _pañcamakāras_ as appropriate ritual offerings.

Verses eight and nine form a unit with the former presenting the _śrīvidyā_ esoterically as the _kādi_ form of the fifteen syllable mantra and the latter offering the _hādi vidyā_ as a derivative of _kādi_. The fact that the _hadi_ is treated as derivative form of _kādi_ has not been lost on contemporary adepts who wish to affirm that this "Vedic" source asserts not only the superiority of _kādi_ but its "originality". Verse ten would seem to belong with the first five verses since it shifts the subject back to _śrīcakra_ but now in its relationship with the _śrīvidyā_. In this respect it is possible to see continuity with verses eight and nine.

Verses eleven and twelve raise two of the most

important and controversial issues in Śrīvidyā: respectively the practice of kāmakalādhyāna and the ritual use of the pañcamakāras. These are obviously the verses which raise the greatest doubts concerning the "authenticity" of the text within non-Kaula lineages. That the two most controversial subjects within Śrīvidyā should follow one another suggests to some contemporary Kaula adepts that their inclusion is affirmed from the "earliest" stages of the tradition; to non-Kaula traditionalists, it suggests that the verses may be interpolations.

Verses thirteen through fifteen return to the physical forms of the goddess and her theological identity with Śiva and the Absolute. But they can be taken as a unit only by a reading into the verses a continuity of theme since there is no obvious stated or implied relationship between them. Verse fifteen summarizes the teaching of the text by maintaining that realization with the goddess is achieving unity with the Absolute and that this is the culmination of spiritual discipline (sādhana in both ritual and meditative dimensions). It may once have been the texts concluding remarks. Verse sixteen, in a way not unlike the ways in which the ṣoḍaśī forms of the mantra seem to append themselves to an "original" fifteen unit form or, in general, the way "sixteenths" append to units of "fifteen" (and "fourths" to triads), appends itself to the fifteen

previous verses of the text. It extols the greatness of the text and its value in the liberative process but adds little to either its theological or ritual import.

In summary, it is clear that Tripurā Upaniṣad provides a remarkable opportunity for adepts to address a number of subjects central to Śākta Tantrism and Śrīvidyā in general. In addition, its summary form and shifting subjects allow the outsider to view the tradition more holistically than is otherwise possible in so short an exposition. While Tripurā Upaniṣad lacks the thoroughness of a work like the Setubandha it is comparable inasmuch as it raises a remarkable number of issues in a far more limited space. Thus it would seem important both to Śrīvidya traditionalists and to observers of the tradition.

D. Remarks on the Present Translation

Though a new edition of the Sanskrit text is in order, the present translation in order to fit into the scope of the whole dissertation project must be satisfied with a "corrected" or emended version of an edition that already exists. By reviewing a number of manuscripts and comparing them to Sitarama Shastri's 1922 edition of the Tripurā Upaniṣad as it appears in Kaula and other Upaniṣads (an edition including both Bhāskararāya's and Appayya Dīkṣita's commentaries), I have prepared in the notes many needed

emendations to text. When compared to other manuscripts it was soon clear that the printed edition was lacking in substance as well as grammatically flawed to the extent of being unintelligible. It was my original intent to translate only the available printed edition of the text and to include here not only the Tripurā but the Kaula Upaniṣad as well but upon careful review of the Shastri edition it became clear that serious revisions were in order at even the superficial level of grammatical consistency. This turned a modest translation project into a serious philological exercise.

The notes to the translation offer corrections resulting not only from a comparative review of manuscripts but as the text is read and interpreted by a number of contemporary Śrīvidyā adepts. In other words, criteria for determining the "best" reading of the text includes the interpretations of living adepts as well as making the most sound philological choices. While this may be a bit out of the ordinary, the method I believe is justified by the nature of the text itself: as a Tantric source, its understanding depends on living, oral traditions, traditions which also have a privileged access to the written commentarial traditions. In the vast majority of cases philological criteria provided the most convincing arguments for inclusion or revision of the text, but in select

instances (cited in the notes) the living traditionalists offered invaluable advice for understanding both the verses and Bhāskararāya's gnomic phrasings.

Of the five manuscripts I reviewed in manuscript libraries in India I deemed two of them most useful for the present set of emendations. While the edition that results from these emendations cannot be considered "critical", there can be little doubt that it offers a very significant improvement on Shastri's printed edition. I also considered a "corrected" copy of Shastri's text offered for my review by Dr. S. Venkataraghavan of Madras. The manuscripts under consideration are as follows:

1. A Telugu script version copied into a ledger notebook by one K. Sastry in 1916 including Bhāskararāya commentary is available in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library at the University of Madras. This mss. bears the number 1044 but is catalogued at present, according to the librarians, following a "different system" than the original numbering system. It is, in any case, a fair and valuable copy of the text and provided many useful emendations. It is referred to in the notes by the abbreviation **GOML** (for Gov't Oriental Manuscripts Library version).

2. A manuscript in Devanagari script of uncertain age, copied on paper was provided for me by the Adyar Library in Madras and with the consent of Dr. K. Kunjinniraja a photocopy was supplied. This manuscript including Bhāskararāya's comments was extremely useful and was the best grammatical version of the text available, including Shastri's text. Its readings on grammatical points are usually preferred. This text is referred to as **Adyar** in the notes.

3. A manuscript in Devanagari script copied into a small ledger in 1906 (manuscript copier unknown) with Bhāskararāya's remarks also exists in the Government Oriental Manuscript Library but it is in an unfortunate state of decay. Dr. Venkataraghavan was kind enough to help me retrieve certain portions of the text that proved quite

valuable. This referred to as **GOML II** in the notes.

4. A manuscript in Malayalam script was reviewed at the Adyar library and only cursory notes were taken as it appeared to be full of errors in grammar and lacking certain vital remarks. It was, however, useful for confirming the reading of one of the other manuscripts over another and thus served a purpose not unlike that of the fifth manuscript cited below.

5. A manuscript in Grantha characters was shown to me by a Śrīvidyā adept in Madras who claimed it passed through his lineage for at least three generations. The text had comparative value but was found less useful as a primary source of revision than **GOML** or **Adyar**.

Mention should be made here of the efforts and assistance of Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy, Chairman of the Sanskrit Department of Madurai-Kamaraj University, for his help not only in preparing the emendations of the Sanskrit text but for his painstaking efforts to improve the translation into English. Dr. Sundaramoorthy's scholarship in Tantrism and Śāktism and his contribution to the present effort should not go unnoticed. He reviewed each part of the translation word by word, made innumerable corrections and often spared the translator from making embarrassing errors.

1. Regarding Kaivalyāśrama's work see Part One, Chapters Three and Four.

2. Bhāskararāya's remarks in verse at the opening of his commentary it seems only make matters more confusing, especially with regard to his reference to the Śrī Saṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra, a text with no known reference. See endnote two on Bhāskararāya's opening comments for further discussion of the problem.

3. For editions see below, notes to the translation and the bibliography for details.

4. For a reference to this source see the citation listed in Potter, Karl, compiler and editor, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Vol. I, Bibliography, Revised Second Edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, p.286.

5. See Potter as cited above, p.420.

6. See Sastry, A. K., editor, The Tripurā Upaniṣad with the commentaries of Rāmānanda and Bhāskararāya. Varanasi: Hanuman Ghat, 1984. This edition plagiarizes the edition of Bhāskararāya's commentary as it was originally presented by Sitarama Shastri in: Kaula and other Upaniṣads. Calcutta-London: University Press, 1922. (Tantrik Text, XI) It seems impossible that the exact errors which appear is Sitarama Shastri's edition should appear in the subsequent edition. This unfortunately casts doubt on the integrity of the edition of Rāmānanda's commentary as well though this has not appeared in print before. As noted, the Adyar manuscript differs so significantly from this printed edition one is left wondering how the printed edition was compiled and from what manuscripts since none of this information is provided by the editor.

7. On the life and date of Bhāskararāya see the Introduction to the VVR as cited in the Bibliography.

8. Naṭarāja of "Guru" Mandali, Madurai, March, 1984.

Śrī

Tripurāmahopaniṣad
OM! May my speech and mind be peaceful!
Let there be prosperity!

The commentary on the Tripurāmahopaniṣad by Bhāskararāya
OM! Peace, peace, peace

How can it be said that one does not see the arising of one lotus in [yet another] lotus when the two feet of the Teacher (śrī nātha) are [touching] the thousand-petalled [lotus of my own head]? [1]

I shall now comment on that great Upaniṣad consisting of sixteen verses, belonging to the central portion of the Āraṇyaka; studied by Ṛg Vedic experts (bahvṛca) who perform rituals in accordance with the Śrī Sāṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra, to whom the mantras are those belonging to the Śākala school [of the Ṛg Veda], and for whom Kauṣītaka is the Brāhmaṇa [text followed].[2]

Now in this respect the Veda which is studied by those belonging to the three estates (traivarṇikaiḥ) is divided twofold according to the pūrva and uttara sections.[3] That [Veda], even though it is twofold, is intended (pravṛttaḥ) to specify a particular action either directly or indirectly.[4] Furthermore, some rituals (kriyā) are associated with deities as in the worship of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Agni, while others are not associated with deities, such as bathing (the image as an accessory) for a fire sacrifice (agnihotra).[5]

Qualified persons (adhikāriṇaḥ) who believe (viśvāśīla) there is a soul different from the body capable of going to and returning from the other (heavenly) world indulge in

rituals (kriyā) which yield other-worldly results.

Similarly, only those who believe there is a power (śakti) in the deities, in spite of its being unseen by us, capable of granting what is desired indulge in the worship of Rama, Krsna and others. Intending only these persons, Badarayana and others advocated [the worship of] images of deities.[6] But despite the real presence (devatāsadbhāva) of the deities, those wavering in faith due to the influence of actions (karma) in previous births are qualified only for the rituals (karma) described in the pūrva section [of the Veda] and not for the [contemplative] worship (upāsana) of the deities. Intending only these people [who waver in faith], Jaimini and others advocated only the doctrine of the priority of ritual (karmapradhānyavāda) by rejecting the five forms of deities, including images.[7] When some who have performed ritual actions (karma) diligently and whose karma has come to fruition undertake the [external] worship (pūjā) of Śiva they are criticized in the Mṛgendra Saṃhitā commentary [of Narāyanakaṇṭha] for enjoining the abandonment of mīmāṃsaka doctrines.[8]

But even those contemplative worshippers (upāsaka) of a deity who know the secret intention of the five forms including images and the rest, need not reject the doctrine of the priority of ritual action.[9] In such a situation for those diligent in ritual actions yet without any special ripening of the mind there does not arise the conviction

(viśvāsa) to perform [contemplative worship (upāsana) of a deity]. By destructive logic, if doubt arises in that object in which one depended previously then there occurs a loss of both [that previous faith and what was not yet been fully understood]. Hence, in order to protect those [who are dependent on ritual actions alone for their faith] even contemplative worshippers (upāsaka) should perform rituals (karma) in the same way as if they had convictions [in their absolute efficacy]. With this intention [it is stated in the Bhagavadgītā]:

> You ought to act also considering the welfare of the world.[10]

These and others [similar] are the injunctions. While,

> One should not bring about confusion in the minds of the ignorant attached to action.[11]

These and others [similar] are the prohibitions.
Even those who follow the higher path (uttarabhūmikādhirūḍhaivapi) should maintain the views of the lower and it is necessary that they not reveal their own opinions--this is the essence of what is meant. Therefore it is established that these injunctions and prohibitions apply even to those who are liberated while yet living (jīvanmukta) travelling on the path which transcends the three guṇas [that permeate the material world].[12]

But to those in whom the ripening of the mind is observed to be firm by their practice of rituals (karma) in

many [previous] births, as discussed in the pūrva [portions of the Vedas], after analyzing such persons carefully, one's own views should be gradually revealed. Otherwise there is danger of breaking the tradition (sampradāya). Those various levels (bhūmikabheda) which lead up to the contemplative worship (upāsti) of [the Goddess] Tripurasundari I have presented in detail in the Setubandha commentary on the Vāmakeśvaratantra.[13]

However, in those texts [which espouse] contemplative worship (upāsana) priority is given only to the deities; priority is not on ritual action (karma). Indeed because of the absence of a priority on ritual actions (kriyā) it is appropriate to say that Vedānta reveals its object as accomplish [through the contemplative worship rather than ritual action] on the forms of the deities.[14]

There are three forms of deity: physical (sthūla), subtle (sūkṣma) and supreme (para). Now the first [gross form of the deity] is described in the respective verses for meditation (dhyānaśloka); the second [subtle form] consists of the respective root-mantra (mūlamantra); the third [transcendent form] consists of contemplative worship (upāsana). Because of the threefold form of the deities contemplative worship (upāsti) is divided threefold respectively into external sacrifice (bahiryāga), silent repetition (japa) [of the mantra] and internal sacrifice (antaryāga).[15] All of these [three types of contemplative

worship] are instructed in the Ṛg Veda in the form of [this] great Upaniṣad beginning with the words, "the three cities" (tisraḥpura) and ending with "upaniṣad".

On the strength of the third and the tenth verses [of the text] it can be said that the intention of this Upaniṣad is to praise the supreme deity. In order to indicate the principle deity the first verse is said:[16]

[VERSE ONE]

> She is presiding over the three cities and the three paths [and this śrīcakra] in which the syllables a', ka' and tha' [representing the forty-eight letters of Sanskrit are inscribed]. [She is] the abode of all, deathless, ancient, great [and] the principal cause of the greatness of the gods.[17]

There are five types of liberation: [1] being in the same world (sālokya) is one; [2-4] proximity (samīpya), similarity in form (sarūpya) and union (sāyujya) [though] three [are taken as a single unit] and [5] identity (kaivalya).[18] Among these [five] the first and the last are one path (mārga) each and the middle group of three are another path.[19] Thus the Taittirīya [śruti] says:

> The learned one [who dies] when the sun is in the northern path, going to the splendor of the gods, obtains union (sāyujya) with Āditya; whoso [dies] when the sun is in the southern path, going to the spelendor of the forefathers, obtains union (sāyujya) and being in the same world (sālokya) as the moon. These are the splendors of the sun and the moon. The learned brahmana is victorious [and rejects these two] and therefore obtains the splendor of Brahman, thus the splendor of Brahman.[20]

The idea is this: Yogis who withhold their semen (ūrdhvaretasām) performing ritual action according to their respective stage in life (āśrama) obtain the world of the moon in the form of being in the same world (sālokyarūpa) [with the deity]; those who perform contemplative worship (upāsana) holding a particular [deity] as one's own master obtain similarity in form (sārūpya) [with the deity]; those who perform contemplative worship on their own self-identity (ahaṃgraha) obtain union (sāyujya) [with the deity]. These three [forms of contemplative worship] are in the form of obtaining the sun (āditya). But those who possess knowledge of Brahman in the form of a contemplative worship on the qualitiless (nirguṇopāsti), they obtain the place (pada) of Brahman in the form of identity (kaivalya) [with Brahman]. In the second section of the Viṣṇupurāṇa these three paths have been elaborated, beginning with the verse,

> North of the Agastya [asterism] and south of the Ajavīthi [asterism] is the path of the forefathers, just outside the path of Vaisvānara.[21]

and ending with the verse,

> The seer with knowledge and discrimination goes to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu.[22]

Because there are three paths (mārga) the cities [mentioned in the verse] are understood to be three.[23] Because [She] pervades the three cities, fills [them] and is in the form of them, the Supreme Deity is called Tripurā

[that is, the Three Cities].[24]

> By knowledge of the Self (*ātman*), by inward [contemplative worship], by knowledge of the Mother, by meditation on the "I" and by devotional action (*karma*), a mortal obtains the place of identity (*kaivalya*).[25]

This fivefold division [of liberation] into three [paths] explains the attainment of the Goddess.[26] Therefore She alone is [the one] called the three cities [in Verse One][27]; She alone is the three paths [that is, the compound in the verse is explained as a *bahuvrīhi*] She of whom there are three paths (*panthānaḥ*) [for obtaining Her liberation]. Since it is not in a *tatpuruṣa* compound [the word *tripathā* as it is used in Verse One] is not [taken] in the neuter gender [on the authority of the Katyāyana *Varittika*], "[the word] *patha* ending with a *samasanta* affix [see Panini 2.4.17] is neuter when compounded with a numeral or an *avyaya*, as in *tripatham*, *supatham*, etc., but not so in the *supantha* and *atipantha* where the *samāsānta* has not been added because of the prohibition stated in Panini 5.4.69." [28]

According to the Vedic etymologists the word *carsanī* [as it occurs in Verse One] means people.[29] The Goddess alone is called *viśvacarṣiṇī* [literally, the people of the universe] [because] She is the one in whom all (*viśva*), that is, the whole of the people (*carṣiṇī*) [or] creatures [find existence]. This is as much as to say that She is the

creator (utpādika) of the living world; or that She is all-seeing (viśvadṛṣṭi). This is to be understood [in the context of the verse], "That One thought °Let me be many. Let me propagate.'" 30 Being so established in the Śruti, Brahman's initial seeing is omniscient [and] that [Brahman] is [in its initial act of creation] the form of desire and the form of action.31 In another Śruti [it is said], "That desired, that performed austerity".32 [And also,] "knowledge, strength and action are inherent" is said in the Śruti.33 Even though the initial modification (vṛtti) is not different from Brahman it is said to have the form of knowledge (jñāna), desire (icchā) and action (kṛti).

That [initial] modification [of the One into many] is [technically] called śānta [literally "peaceful] because it is the aggregate form of desire, knowledge and action.34 It [insofar as She is Brahman] is called transcendent (parā) because it is the aggregate form of [the four emanations of sound in its primordial evolution technically called] paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī].35 She is called [by the name] Ambikā because She is the aggregate form of [the three consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva and their respective powers, namely] Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī.36 She in Her peaceful aspect is the deity of the [central point known as the] baindava cakra established in the sricakra. It has been said in the Nityāhṛdaya and elsewhere that the supreme Brahman [insofar as it is],

> ...the baindava cakra [i.e., the bindu of the śrīcakra, it] has the nature of the three Little Mothers (mātṛkās) [viz., the technical devolutions of Brahman as sound (śabda) known as paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī] and it pervades the place of the universal waves [i.e., the world consisting of the thirty-six tattvas]. 37

And [it is] that [baindava cakra] alone which is indicated by the three adjectives [given in Verse One] beginning with "the three cities" [that is, tisraḥpura, patha and viśvacarini]. The [use of] plural and singular adjectives indicates that what is qualified is simultaneously a single and threefold form.

Brahma that is not different from liberation has also been discussed in the Kālikāpurāṇa:

> Her maṇḍala consists of triangles (trikoṇa), the outer gates (bhūpura) consist of three lines; Her mantra also is said to consist of three syllables and similarly She has a threefold form.38 Kuṇḍalinī śakti is threefold and there are three deities in Creation. Because everything [connected with Her] is three, She is called Tripura.

The description thus far having been from the point of view of the creation of objects (artha), from [the word] "where" (yatra) [onwards] She is described from the point of view of the creation of sounds (śabda). [The word] "where" [in the verse] means She in whom Tripurā [the Goddess of the Three Cities, manifests] as the peaceful form [called] Ambikā, etc. [The word] akathāḥ means the sixteen [vowels] beginning with [the letter] "a", the sixteen [consonants] beginning with "ka" [and the sixteen remaining consonants

that] begin with "tha".[39] These are the syllables (aksaras) [referred to in the verse] and these syllables are combined [and thus are called in the verse, samvistha, combined]. As the banyan tree is found in its seed, so these [syllables] contain everything and are complete.[40]

The letter "h" because its original form (svarūpa) [emanates from] the reflective aspect (vimarśa) [rather than the illuminative (prakāśa)] is not counted separately [as a letter].[41]

[This is] in accordance with the saying,

> The letter "h" is praised as having the form of kalā [in the scheme of the 36 tattvas that make up reality] and is described as vimarśa, reflection.[42]

The letter "ḷ" [the Vedic retroflex] is not different [for mantric purposes] from "l" [so it too is not counted separately]; and the letter "kṣ" is only a conjunction of the letters "k" and "ṣ" and is not independent [and thus not counted separately]. Therefore the mātṛkā letters [for the purposes of the mantraśāstra] number only forty-eight [not fifty-one].[43] And it further says in the Sūtasamhitā,

> I salute the Supreme Kalā who is one, two-fold, three-fold and similarly sixteen-fold, She who is divided into thirty-two [aspects].[44]

[She is] two-fold by the division into vowels and consonants. The meaning is that the vowels are sixteen and the consonants thirty-two.[45]

[By the word] "dwelling in" (adhiṣṭhāya) is meant the

Supreme Deity who is worshipped (upāsayām) as presiding over that [baindava cakra], the very form (svarūpa) of the bindu cakra [as the center point of the śrīcakra] having been described in the first half [of the verse]. Regarding this [bindu cakra] there is some deity presiding over the three cities (tripurā) which is in form of the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra].[46] [The verb] "it is" (asti) is to be imported here in accordance with the dictum of Katyayana [in his Varttikas on Pāṇini] which says, "After a third person noun even though 'asti' or 'bhavati' [meaning "it is'] does not occur its [meaning] should be imported."[47] Or the continuative [form of the] verb (lyapo'nvayaḥ) is to be connected with the action prescribed in the later mantra.[48]

That Goddess is [described in the verse as] "without decay" (ajarā) [meaning She is] without death. "[The verbal root]√jṝs [from which ajarā is derived] is used in the sense of diminishing age (hāni)", thus the word hāni [as it occurs in the Dhātupāda as shown here] precisely indicates the destruction of death [not merely the absence of old age].[49]

[The word] "ancient" (purāṇī) [in the verse means] beginningless (anādi), [that is] one without birth. [She is called] mahattarā [in the verse], [that is] supreme in all respects even among the known deities called Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[50] And [She is described further in the Verse as the one] who is that form of mahimā, the greatness of those

deities.[51] She alone is the primary cause (nidānam) of the greatness of other deities, that is to say, [these deities] obtain greatness by worshipping (upāsitāyam) Her.[52]

> Śambhu worships (pūjayate) the Goddess who is auspicious (śubhā) and possesses the power of the mantra (mantraśaktimayī).[53]

The different images (ambapratimābhedānām) of the Mother which are to be worshipped (pūjanīyānām) by all the gods have been elaborated in detail in the Padmapurāṇa through stories such as this one.[54] And similarly from the dictum, 'A beggar does not beg from another beggar when someone who is not a beggar is also present', the implication is that with reference to the contemplative worship (upāsti) of other deities, the worship (upāsti) of the Supreme Goddess takes preference.[55] It has been said by me in the Paraśivastava,

> O Supreme Śiva, why should I, a beggar, beg from Viṣṇu, Brahma, Indra and other beggars, those who enjoy mastery and wealth given by you, saying °do thou give me'. Even an ignorant man who already enjoys the result of a twelve-days' sacrifice only desires the result of a jyotiṣṭoma [sacrifice, which is superior to a twelve-days' sacrifice] and not the result of a twelve-days' sacrifice.[56]

[The epithets in the verse beginning with the word] "ajara" ("without death") indicate epithets of Brahma the Supreme Deity presiding over the cycle (cakra) of Brahmas [who create the world anew at the beginning of each cosmic cycle]. The word "deity" (devatā) is in the feminine gender intending to indicate its signifying [the Goddess].[57]

Therefore in other scriptures (śruti) words such as ajarā, deathless, are used in the neuter gender [rather than in the feminine as is here the case]. Similarly the followers of the Ātharvaṇi school say,

> The unassailable city of the gods has eight cakras and nine doors, Her golden sheath is the heavenly world surrounded by light.
> In that three-fold golden sheath established in three ways, the Knowers of Brahman know that in that [golden sheath] is possessed the worshipful Self.[58]

The sense of the verse is that above the eight cakras beginning with [the outermost] bhūpura [forming the three-lined gateway of the sricakra] and ending with the trikoṇa [the innermost triangle] is a sheath surrounding the bindu with its three forms [that is, the bindu as expanded into the trikoṇa]. In this [bindu] the Great Being is present [though it is not visible by virtue of the sheath]. Its being ineligible [therefore] for external worship (bahirpūjā) is indicated by [the word] yakṣa [that is, Great Being]. Only the knowers of Brahman know that [the bindu] is identical with the Supreme Goddess and only within themselves. Others do not [know this]. This has been discussed in detail in the Setubandha [my commentary on the Vāmakeśvaratantra].[59]

Thus having discussed the bindu cakra, the second verse, beginning with the words, "the nine Yonis", is pronounced in order to indicate the cakra whose nature is the nine Yonis and whose form is an aggregate of the [inner

triangle of the *śrīcakra* known as the] *trikoṇa* and the [sub-cakra consisting of eight minor triangles called the] *vasukoṇa*.[60]

1. Bhāskararāya offers the image of the student prostrating before his teacher touching his head to the teacher's feet in obeisance. The 'thousand-petalled lotus' is the sahasraka cakra described in yogic theory as the source of realization that lies at the top of the brain. The author is punning on the logic that no one sees an ordinary lotus simply sprout from another but here he says the lotus-like center of realization blossoms by having performed service at the lotus-like feet of the teacher.

2. The meaning of the verse here is clear enough. The other major commentators on the text, Upaniṣadbrahmayogin and Rāmānanda both agree that the Upaniṣad belongs to the Ṛg Vedic schools yet in several instances Bhāskararāya mentions that it also is followed by Ātharvavedins. It is, of course, that the text was learned in both Vedic schools and that Bhāskararāya being a Ṛgvedin prefers this recension and interpretation.

What is meant by the "Sāṅkhyāyanakalpasūtra" is unclear since there is no known text by this name. Does he mean both the srauta and gṛhya sūtras bearing the same name?

According to Winternitz the only recension of the Rg Veda surviving belongs to the Sākala school with which Bhaskararaya identifies. See Winternitz, Maurice, History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, translated by Mrs. S. Ketkar. Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, Second edition 1972, p.57 ftn.1. Winternitz also says concerning the Araṇyaka (p.235 as cited above), "The Kauśītaka-Brāhmaṇa, which also belongs to the Ṛg-Veda, ends with the Kauśitaki-Aranyaka, of which the Kauśītaki-Upaniṣad (also called the Kausitaki-Brahmana-Upanisad) forms only a part." Our text, however, does not appear in the Araṇyaka as printed. For translation of the Sāṅkhyāyana Araṇyaka see Winternitz as cited, p.235, ftn.1. Concerning the Kauśītaka Brāhmaṇa see Keith, A.B., trsl., Ṛgveda Brahmanas: the Aitareya and Kauśītaka Brāhmaṇas of the Ṛgveda. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, First edition 1920, reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.

3. Traivarnikaih, that is, "by those belonging to the three estates. This follows the standard Hindu interpretation whereby only members of the twice-born castes, the Brahmanas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiṣyas are entitled to Vedic study.

The division of the Vedic sources into pūrva, literally 'earlier' and uttara, 'later', sections (khaṇḍas) refers to the distinction between ritual and speculative subjects respectively.

4. Bhāskararāya has in mind those who would separate action (**karma**) and knowledge (**jñāna**) as described in the respective **pūrva** and **uttara** sections of the Vedas as being mutually opposed. He suggests that even the knowledge-oriented sections, the **uttara khaṇḍa**, instruct some form of action. This goes against the views of the strict **kevalādvaitins** such as Śaṅkara who treat action and knowledge as utterly separate.

By "directly" is meant that the text itself enjoins the action while "indirectly" indicates that the injunction comes through some other means.

5. Emend to read **rāmakṛṣṇopāstvādayo'gnyupāstvadayaśca** following GOML.

6. Bādarāyaṇa is the traditionally attributed author of the **Brahmasūtras**, one of the cornerstones of Vedānta teaching, the others being the Upanisads and the **Bhagavadgītā.**

7. Jaimini, the traditional author of the Mīmāṁsasūtras, is at the forefront of the Ritualist schools (mīmāṁsa) that maintained the primacy and efficacy of ritual actions as fulfilling the injunctions of the Vedas and leading to liberation. They are placed in contrast here to those advocating knowledge as liberative. Bhāskararāya's view, not unlike that of Śaṅkara on this point, is that ritual is a necessary prerequisite to the higher path' of knowledge. Where he differs from Śaṅkara most evidently is in his belief that (1) knowledge is a species of action albeit a very different kind that ordinary ritual action, and hence (2) that knowledge and action are not mutually contradictory, and (3) that ritual action (or action in general) should not be given up once knowledge is the goal or is achieved.

8. The remark should be understood to mean that had such persons not thought they would gain by doing rituals in the first place and then abandon their worship of Śiva, they would not now be criticized for having abandoned the principles of Mīmāṃsa. Bhāskararāya does not imply that **Mṛgendra Saṃhitā** which is a Śaiva Āgama criticizes Saiva ritual. See **Mṛgendra Saṃhitā,** chapter one, verses 2-6 with the commentary in **Śrī Mṛgendramkāmikopāgamam with the vṛtti by Śrī Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇakaṇṭha,** edited by K. and N. Kṛṣṇaśāstri. Devakottai, India: Devakottai Sivagamasiddhāntaparipalanasaṅgha, 1928. Also verses 2-20 with commentary in **The Mṛgendra Tantram with the commentary of Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha,** edited with a preface by Pt. Madhusudan Kaul Sastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1930. (No.50 of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies).

Emend **śivaśaktipūjāyāṃ** to **śivapūjāyām.**

9. Precisely what is meant by the phrase **vigrahādipañcakanirāsena** is not clear, that is, what are the five forms of the deities beginning with the **vigraha** or anthropomorphic aspect. Many Hindu deities in various aspects share the triad configuration of Tripurasundari, they have in addition to an anthropomorphic form mantra and yantra forms. What the other two Bhaskararaya has in mind was not known to living adepts and remains a mystery.
Emend to **pradhānyavāda eva.**

10. Bhagavadgītā, 3.20.

11. Bhagavadgītā, 3.26. Śaṅkara in his commentary on this verse also encourages the wise to support the continuance of actions by ignorant people, but wise persons themselves. Bhāskararāya differs on this detail as the text makes perfectly clear.

12. Bhāskararāya affirms the basic Śākta Tantric view supporting the possibility of liberation while yet living in the world but differs from Śaṅkara significantly on the issue by affirming that jīvanmuktas should continue to abide by the injunctions and prohibitions of the scriptures and should continue to perform rituals for the sake of others or for making an appropriate appearance.

13. cf., Bhāskararāya's remarks on Vāmakeśvaratantra (Nityāsoḍaśikārṇava) 1.1. and the commentary up to the beginning of the first verse. Contained here is a discussion of the various levels (bhūmikas) that lead up to the worship of Tripurā, considered the highest level of worship. See the Nityāsoḍaśikārṇava (Vāmakeśvaratantra), with the commentary of Bhāskararāya (in Sanskrit), edited by Ma. Ma. Pra. Kasinatha Vasudeva Abhyankar. Poona: Anandasrama, Third edition 1976, pp.1-9.

14. Bhāskararāya holds that realization of Brahman occurs only through upāsana on the deities and that this is a form of knowledge, not merely a kind of action. This is taken up in detail in Part One of the thesis.
Emend to **devatārūpasiddhavastubodhakā vedānta iti vācoktaḥ** following GOML.

15. Emend to **traividyādevatadupāsti** following Adyar and GOML.

16. Emend **prādhānyena devatām** to **prādhānadevatam.**

17. The translation of the Verse like all others follows Bhāskararāya's interpretation, if one followed Upaniṣadbrahmayogin the translation would be quite different. For comparison:

By Her empirical view there are three cities, three paths and [on the śrīcakra] in which the syllables a', ka' and tha' are inscribed, She presides.

She is deathless, ancient, great and the principle cause of the greatness of the gods.

Following Rāmānanda still another interpretation:

There are three cities, three paths; She is capable of moving in the wheel of the Universe in which there are fifty one letters inscribed in the form of 'a', 'ka' and 'tha' and [She] presides over these.

She is without decay, without birth, great and cause of the greatness of the gods.

18. Discussion of the five types of liberation occurs in more detail in Bhāskararāya's commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma, #625. See also Setubandha on Yoginīhṛdaya 2.2f. Kaivalya is give as a name of the Goddess Lalita in Lalitāsahasranāma #625, see Sastry translation, pp.252-253 (as listed in the bibliography).

19. Emend **tāsvādyantye** to **tāsvādyantau.**

20. Bhāskararāya quotes the same passage on Lalitāsahasranāma #625. Its location has not been ascertained in either recensions of the Taittīriya Upaniṣad or in Taittīriya Brāhmaṇa.

21. Bhāskararāya attributes these quotations to the third chapter of the Viṣṇupurāṇa in all available manuscripts. The passages are, however, from the second chapter. See the Viṣṇupurāṇa, 2.8.85 and 2.8.103.

22. What Bhāskararāya means is not clear and neither his reason for choosing this scriptural passage to illustrate his point.

The Agastya asterism is identified with Canopes. Vaiśvanara means the path the moon takes across the sky from horizon to horizon.

23. Emend **margatrividhyādgantavyāḥ** to **marga-trividhyādaragantavyāḥ** following GOML.

24. Emend the whole sentence following GOML and Adyar to read: **īdṛsapuratrayavyapakatvāt purakatvāt tadrūpakatvāt vā paradevatā tripuretyucyate.** On the name of the Goddess Tripurā see Lalitāsahasranāma #626 with Bhāsakararāya's remarks.

25. This quotation has not been identified.

26. Emend **traipuraprāpteruktatvāt** to **deviprāpteruktatvāt** following both GOML and Adyar.

27. Emend **tripurā** to **saivatripathā** following Adyar.
The use of the three quotations beginning with the verses of the Visnupurāna adds little to Bhāskararāya's argument and contributes to the ambiguity of the explanation. Given his usual care and erudition I suspect this whole passage might be an interpolation though no manuscripts support this opinion. Had Bhāskararāya skipped all three citations and added only, "**ayam... tu kaivalyanupabrahmapadapratiriti**" many doubts would be alleviated concerning the significance of scriptural references.

28. Katyāyana's varttika occurs under Pāṇini 2.4.17 and supports the interpretation of the compound as a bahuvrīhi. (Vasu in his translation places this varttika under 2.4.18 where it does not belong.) The idea is simple enough: when the word patha is joined with a numeral it can take a different set of gender endings in order to agree with the subject.

29. If Bhāskararāya has in mind the Vedic grammarian Yaska no statement to this effect can be found in his works. This does not preclude his referring to an oral interpretation.

30. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 6.2.3.

31. I have taken sarvajanakam to mean sarvajananam since it is clear that Bhāskararāya is referring to the initial creative role of Śakti as icchā, kriyā and jñāna. This is explained in Part One.

32. The second portion of the quotation is Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.6., the first portion is unidentified.

33. Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad, 6.8.

34. According to oral traditions śānta is a technical term meaning supreme' or final' and is not used here in the usual sense of °peaceful'. See Bhāskararāya's remarks on Lalitāsahasranāma #141 and the Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad 6.19.

35. This is more elaborately explained in Part One. In summary, oral tradition explains that according to mantraśāstra a sound is classified into four aspects of emanation from its primordial source. These are called

parā, paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī. The inherent nature is considered transcendent (parā) and unmanifest (avyakta) and so it is in a state of pre-articulated latency. As it begins the process of manifestation sound emerges in the mūlādhara cakra at the base of the spine in the human body, still unarticulated it is called Paśyantī. It travels up the subtle channel called the suṣumnā and at the anahata cakra located in the area of the heart it is called madhyamā and is still unarticulated. When it reaches the point of articulation just above the anahata cakra it is called vaikharī. For textual reference see Yoginīhṛdaya, I.36-40 with commentaries and Bhāskararāya on Lalitāsahāranāma #366, #368, #370 and #371.

36. Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā, and Raudrī are the feminine consorts of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively identified here with the three lines which make up the trikoṇa or innermost triangle of the śrīcakra. As the first triangle in the śrīcakra as it emanates from the central bindu (according to the sṛṣṭi or creation theory identifying the universe with the śrīcakra) these are the first three aspects of Brahman, the Absolute, to devolve. Hence they are identified with the first moments of dualistic consciousness, the first reflective awareness (vimarśa) of the 'I' as an entity among other entities. Brahman, initially one, projects these three powers of Creation, Maintenance and Destruction who are in turn responsible for the further projection of reality as it is understood through a knower, an object of knowledge and a process of knowing. They are also identical to the sound emanations of paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī as described in the previous note---the central bindu is identified with the para aspect of Brahman as sound (śabdabrahman). A complete explanation of the symbolism of the triangles within the śrīcakra is given in Part One.
See also Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.18-19, 22 and 36-40.

37. By Nityahṛdaya Bhāskararāya means the Yoginīhṛdaya. No other historical commentator or living adept is known to use this name, but it was clear to several who commented that this must be another name for the Yoginīhṛdaya. See Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.11, Kaviraj second edition, p.17; Ānandāśrama edition of Vāmakeśvaratantra, p.208.
Both the Dīpikākara Amṛtānanda and Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha (on Vāmakeśvaratantra) uphold the interpretation that the three Little Mothers (mātṛkās), as these three aspects of the Goddess are known, refer to the three primary evolutes of sound, that is, paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī and that the 'abode of universal waves' means the world construed through the thirty six tattvas or primary elements. See Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.11, Kavirāj second edition, p.17ff.

38. See Rāmeśvarasūri's *vṛtti* on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra*, 10.30 where the same verse of *Kālikapurāṇa* is quoted. *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra with Ramesvara's Commentary*, edited by A. Mahadeva Sastri, revised and enlarged by S. Y. Sastri Dave, Baroda: Oriental Institute, first edition 1923, second revised edition 1950, reprint 1979. (Gaekwad Oriental Series, No.22)

The reference here to *kuṇḍalinī śakti* is to the Goddess as the latent yogic power envisioned as a serpent coiled three times around the *mūlādhara* cakra of the human body. This and other yogic imagery is subject to discussion in Part One.

39. In Bhāskararāya's interpretation of the *mantraśāstra* there are forty-eight letters in the Sanskrit alphabet and these are directly linked to the devolution of Brahman from primordial sound. The vowels are counted as sixteen: a, a, i, i, u, u, r, r, l, l, e, o, ai, au, am (*anusvara*) and ah (*visarga*). The sixteen consonants counted not to include the first consonant **ka** are: ka, kha, ga, gha, na, ca, cha, ja, jha, na, ta, tha, da, dha, na, ta and tha. They are actually seventeen. The remaining consonants are the usual Sanskrit letters. Bhāskararāya's version is noteworthy because he clearly excludes **la**, the Vedic retroflex, kṣa (which he views as a compound of **ka** and **ṣa**) and ha (as a pure consonant considering it rather to be an extension of the *visarga*). According to living adepts this forty-eight letter version is the minority position and virtually all the ritual handbooks, including those of lineages claiming Bhāskararāya's inheritance, use the fifty-one letter alphabet in their *mantraśāstra*. The proponents of the forty-eight letter view observe that this number allows one to divide the total into three sets of sixteen which are esoterically "condensed" in the three **kūṭas** or lines that make up the sixteen letter *śrīvidya* mantra. The proponents of the fifty-one letter view hold that the 'extra' three letters fit nicely into the pattern of threes that pervade the symbolism of Tripurasundarī---as Bhāskararāya notes himself above in the text.

40. An identical illustration is used in the Kashmiri *Pratyabhijñahṛdaya* of Kṣemarāja to argue the simultaneous existence of Śiva and Śakti in both latent and realized forms of the universe. See sūtra four where it says, **yathā ca evaṃ bhagavān viśvaśarīraṃ tathā citisankocātmā saṃkucitaṿirūpaḥ, cotano' grāhako'pi vatadhānikāvat saṃkucitāśeṣaviśvarūpaḥ/tathā ca siddhāntavacanaṃ//.**

41. Another explanation of why "**ha**" is not counted separately is that it is a mere reflection, a *vimarśa*, of the pure illumination, the *prakāśa*, seen in the letter "a". Cf., *Pratybhijñahṛdaya*, 1 and *vṛtti*.

42. The verse is unidentified. It is likely to be from a Tantra.

43. Bhāskararāya on Yoginīhṛdaya, I. 11, quotes this half verse as Saṅketapaddhati. This text has yet to be discovered in manuscript. In his introductory remarks to the Vāmakeśvaratantra in his Setubandha, Bhāskararāya quotes the full verse but with no textual reference. (See p.13 of Ānandāśrama edition.) This agrees with Amṛtānanda's half-verse quotation which also occurs on Yoginīhṛdaya, I. 11 leading us to suspect that Bhāskararāya may have had the Dīpikākara in mind. Amṛtānanda quotes this half-verse again at Yoginīhṛdaya, II.63cd-64ab. The full verse as it appears in Bhāskararaya reads: **akāraḥ sarvavarṇāgrayaḥ prakāśaḥ paramaḥ śivaḥ/ hakāro'ntyaḥ kalārūpo vimarśākhyaḥ prakīrtitaḥ//.**

Note that the following line in the text, **eta eva mātṛkaḥ**, is redundant and is omitted following GOML and Adyar.

44. Sūtasaṁhitā, 4.47.64.

45. The line **akṣarādipadadvaye jaso ḍādeśāndaśaḥ** follows directly and while it appears to make a grammatical remark it seems to explain little and appears out of context. It occurs in all the manuscripts reviewed but has been omitted from the translation. Oral tradition among living adepts adds little on this curious remark and no interpretation proffered appeared to justify its inclusion. Several adepts suggested that it could well be an interpolation but no evidence substantiates this claim.

46. Emend to omit **tri-** in **tribindurūpaṃ** following Adyar.

47. This varttika has not been located.

48. The idea is that since anuṣṭhāya in the Verse is in a non-finite form two alternatives appear to Bhāskararāya as viable, either 'asti', 'it is', should be supplied or the action indicated by anuṣṭhāya is to be completed in some later Verse. The former is likely to be more acceptable to both the sense of the Verse and to Bhāskararāya's interpretation.

49. Bhāskararāya is dissatisfied with usual sense of ajarā (the alpha-privative 'a' plus jara) as without decay or old age' and interprets the Dhātupāda's listing to suggest further that the Goddess is not only 'without decay' but has completely conquered death.

50. Bhāskararāya shows his true colors, here by placing Śakti even above Śiva, a point that other Śāktas hesitate to make so explicitly since they are themselves outwardly

Śaivite in the broadest sense. The name Rudra subordinated to Śakti may well be tolerated in Śaiva-Śākta circles but not Śiva. Several living adepts made a point of this subtle suggestion by remarking that in the final analysis Śiva and Śakti must be considered identical and equal: a point Bhāskararāya makes at the very end of the commentary.

Emend **atiprasiddhānāṃ** to **nāmnā prasiddhānāṃ** following GOML and Adyar.

51. Emend **tadrūpā** to **tadrūpā ca** following GOML and Adyar.

52. Bhāskararāya implies that each aspect of a deity has a separate vidyā, that is, both a science or method of worship and a distinct mantra (also a meaning of vidyā). He also seems to suggest a kind of hierarchy beginning with Śakti, followed by Śiva, Viṣṇu and the rest. Note also that he calls the text here only Tripuropaniṣad, omitting the mahā adjective as do other commentators usually (cf., Rāmānanda and Upaniṣadbrahmayogin). On special significance of the term upāsana and its related forms see Part One.

53. This passage has not been located in the Padmapurāṇa but Bhāskararāya quotes it again under Lalitāsahasranāma #231 as coming from this source.

54. Emend **pratimābhedānāṃ** to **ambāpratimābhedānāṃ**.

55. Bhāskararāya is further suggesting that all other deities are but beggars in comparison to Śakti. Worshipping other deities will bring one only to a certain level of accomplishment, that is, confer only a certain degree of wealth, like begging from a beggar limits one to certain ends. Worshipping Śakti, however, places no limits on the possibilities. This is according to living oral tradition. This is quoted by Bhāskararāya under **Lalitāsahasranāma** #64.

56. Bhāskararāya quotes the same verse under Lalitāsahasranāma #297 but there calls his work the **Śivastava.** Nothing more is known about this work since it has never been recovered. The proverb cited above in Note 54 also occurs again here.

On the forms of the Vedic rituals mentioned in the verse see Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanisads. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925, pp.326-339. (Volumes 31 and 32 of the Harvard Oriental Series)

57. Emend **viśeṣyatābhiprayena** to **viśeṣyatvābhiprayena** following Adyar.

58. Atharva Veda, 10.22.1-2. Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha on Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.6. quotes the same passage and suggests that it belongs to both the śaunakaśākha of the Atharva Veda and the taittirīyaśākha of the Yajur Veda. The Yajurvedins read the epithet, he says, in the nominative case. Regarding the śaunakaśākha of the Atharva Veda and recensions of this text see Winternitz (as cited above) in History of Indian Literature, p.120 and p.120 ftn.2; on the taittirīyaśākha of the Yajur Veda see Winternitz, pp.169-170.

Emend traysre to tryare; also read **tasminyad-yakṣamāt manvattadaivabrahmaviduḥ** following GOML, Adyar and as cited in Setubandha on Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.6.

59. Emend **tadartha** to **taduktam** and read **brahmavida eva viduḥ nānya iti**. Cf., Setubandha on Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.1-6.

60. The primary sense of the nine Yonis is their identification with the yoginis or subsidiary deities of Śakti placed on the sub-cakras of the śrīcakra in the course of Śrīvidyā pūjā. These nine sets of yoginīs called navayoni preside over the nine sub-cakras.

Emend to add **navayonīti** following Adyar.

[VERSE TWO]

> [She creates] the nine yonis and the nine cakras; joined together [to form these] nine [cakras, there are] nine yoginīs [presiding over each of the cakras].
>
> [There are] presiding female deities over [each of the] nine cakras. Syona [the Goddess presiding over the cakras is the cause of happiness]. There are nine gestures (mudrās) and nine bhadrās for each place (mahīnām) on the cakra.[1]

Even though the bindu cakra [in the center of the śrīcakra, is only one point] because it has a three-fold nature, each respectively has three forms.[2] [The verb dīdhire as it occurs in Verse Two is defined] according to the sutra, "Before the Imperative affix hi, sa is substituted for sas" [Pāṇini, 6.4.35], takes this form by virtue of its being a Vedic root.[3] Dīpanam, light, [which defines the verbal root of dīdhire] means illumination [prakāśa] but in this context the meaning intended is creating (utpādanam).[4] The three deities created [and] not different from [Her supreme] peaceful (śānta) [aspect] are [the three śaktis of creation] Icchāśakti [the śakti of desire], Jñānaśakti [the śakti of knowledge] and Kriyāśakti [the śakti of action]. The female deities (śakti) by name Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī [which correspond to the Iccha-, Kriyā- and Jñāna-śaktis are complimented] by the three [corresponding male] forms Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra are created not different from [Her supreme subsuming aspect called] Ambikā. The [corresponding] deities of speech

(vāgdevatā) called Paśyantī, Madhyamā and Vaikharī are created not different from [Her aspect as stage of sound called] Supreme (parā). This is the meaning [of the three-fold nature of the bindu cakra divided respectively in three ways].[5]

Alternatively [it may be interpreted that it was] only the Supreme Goddess, presiding over the Three Cities, who created the nine Yonis.[6] [One] suggestive meaning is that these nine deities alone have been transformed into the nine Yonis [and] cakras.

Furthermore, there are the nine cakras [forming the sub-cakras of the śrīcakra] beginning with [the one called] trailokyamohana in which there are the nine Yonis whose nature are the latent mental impressions (samskaratmana); some of these [latent impressions] already exist, others are still potential. These are called [in Verse Two] the nine cakras (navacakrani) or the agents [of creation, so the verse says] navayonidīdhire, She creates the nine Yonis. The nine Yoni cakras [if taken in the sense of being the central trikoṇa plus the minor eight triangles of the vasukoṇa cakra] arise [from the intersection of] the two [major] Sakti triangles with one [major] Vahni [or Siva] triangle.[7] The three lines of each [major] triangle thus joined together are the nine lines and [produce by their intersection] the forms of angles [which number] only nine.[8] Therefore, [it can be said that] She produces the nine

yoginīs [identified respectively with each of the eight minor triangles which comprise the vasukoṇa sub-cakra and the inner triangle sub-cakra called trikoṇa]. The sense expressed here is that in these nine [sub-] cakras [composed of the eight vasukoṇa triangles plus the one inner trikoṇa are [subtlely present] the nine [sets of] yoginīs beginning with prakaṭa [that is, all the yoginīs of the śrīcakra] and that these [sets of yoginīs] are present here in the form of angles.[9]

> Above that [space and time] is the Supreme,
> the Great, not different from space and time.[10]

With sayings such as this [is conveyed] the conventional expression of the expansion (prapañca) [of the śrīcakra] beginning with the bindu cakra and [insofar as it is] not distinct from space, etc., [ultimately nor] below [the level] of Brahman [in descending stages].[11] Based on this [view of the expansion of the bindu cakra] is the extended [three-dimensional figure] of the Meru [śrīcakra]. Therefore in this one [Meru] cakra beginning with [the outermost sub-cakra, the] bhūpura and ending with the bindu are nine levels (bhūmikā), one above the other.[12]

Presiding over these [nine levels are the deities] called Tripuracakreśvarī [that is, the Goddesses of the cakra of the Three Cities which are] nine only [in number].[13] Those [nine presiding deities] in their subtle

forms are respectively established in the nine Yonis; and the presiding female deities (adhinātha) over the places (mahīmān) on the nine cakras are the agents (kartrya) that create (dīdhire) the nine Yonis [as it is stated in Verse Two].

Syona is an epithet of the Goddess of the [śrī-] cakra. The meaning is that [She] is the cause of happiness (sukha) [following the Vedic interpretation of the word].[14]

The nine gestures (mudrās) [associated with each of the nine sub-cakras of the śrīcakra respectively] are those beginning with [the one called] sarvasamksobhini and ending with sarvayoni.[15] These are also established here [in Verse Two]. The nine auspcious ones (bhadrās) [subsequently mentioned in the verse] are elaborated in the [Vāmakeśvara] Tantra as,

> Dharma, adharma and the Souls; that which measures,what is measured and also the measure.[16]

The meaning is [that these] nine [respectively reflect] merit, sin, the Self (ātman), the inner Self (antarātman), the Supreme Self (paramātman), the knowledge Self (jñanātman), the measurer (pramāta), the measured (prameya) and the measure (pramā). An elaboration on the four-fold nature of the Self is to be seen in the Ātmanopaniṣad:

> The cakra is nine-fold and the cakras are divided nine-fold.[17]

Or by the word "auspcious" (bhadrā) [as it occurs in

Verse Two] is to be understood the mantras. According to some they [the nine bhadrās] refer to the mantras of the Goddesses presiding over the nine cakras.[18] From the proximity [of their relationship in the śrīcakra pūjā] it is appropriate to understand [that what is referred to by the nine bhadrās are] the mantras of the [nine] gestures (mudrās).

The essence of the meaning is that the entire śrīcakra in its subtle form is present in the cakra [insofar as it is viewed from the perspective of dissolution consisting of the three-fold form of the [central] bindu, the [central triangle called the] trikoṇa and the [inner eight minor triangles comprising] the vasukoṇa cakras.[19] In the summarized form of the [śrīcakra] pūjā, at the time of emergency (āpatkālika) we understand from the Tantras an injunction [to perform the pūjā] merely beginning from the vasukoṇa [cakra consisting of the eight minor triangles] to the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra].[20] This is the scriptural authority (śruti) for that [method of performing the pūjā]. Here all the supporting references mentioned in the Tantras and Puranas ar not stated for fear of [unnecessarily] expanding [this commentary].[21]

Now the third verse beginning with the words, "She is one" is stated in order to indicate the [śrī-] cakra [from the point of view of its being] established in the form of two sets of ten triangles and the manvaśra [cakra, that is,

the sub-cakra consisting of fourteen minor triangles].

[VERSE THREE]

> Originally She was one, She became nine, She became nineteen and them twenty-nine. Then [She became] forty- three. [She is] shining intensely, as if desirous. Let the Mothers [identified with the forty-three yoginīs placed on the minor triangles of the śrīcakra] enter into me [through the process of nyāsa and mantras].[22]

The nine Yonis [consist of the] five subtle elements (sukṣmabhūta) and five physical elements (sthūlabhūta) thus there are ten elements.[23] By dividing these physical and subtle [elements] arise the ten mere-essences (tanmātras) beginning with sound. And from these [ten mere-essences] arose the fourteen, namely, the five organs of action, the five organs of knowledge and the four inner organs.[24] All these deities are feminine forms in the form of Yonis (literally, wombs) [meaning having the shape of triangles within the śrīcakra]. All this has been elaborated in the Tantra beginning with the verse:

> The two sets of ten [minor] triangles [within the śrīcakra] have a shining form (sphuratrūpa) which depends upon illumination (prakāśa) [of the] ten elements and the ten mere-essences.[25]

The same process [of interidentification between the Yonis and other aspects] as in the earlier case [of Verse Two] is also instructed here [in Verse Three].

She who [in Verse Three] is [called] the first (prathama) is the deity who is the cause of the whole

universe. She was prior to [creation] only one in the form of the bindu cakra [of the śrīcakra]; then She became nine [as the verse says] with the nature (ātmanā) of nine Yonis. Then [as it is said in Verse Three] She became nineteen in the form of the nine Yonis [identified with the one inner trikoṇa triangle plus the eight minor triangles of the vasukoṇa] and the ten inner Yonis [of the inner ten minor triangles].

The [grammatical] forms of viṃśat [literally meaning twenty, as they occur in the Verse] are Vedic.

Then [it is stated in the Verse] She became twenty-nine by adding the outer ten Yonis [identified with the outer ten minor triangles within the śrīcakra]. She then became forty-three [by adding to twenty-nine] the fourteen [minor triangles] previously [mentioned above]. The meaning is that the Goddess in Her own-form became the forty-three Yonis [identified with the forty-three minor triangles within the śrīcakra].[26] Because the bindu cakra is formless, when it is said "She is One", [the bindu cakra] is not counted among the [forty-three] yoginīs [identified with the forty-three minor triangles of the śrīcakra].[27] [The word] shining (samidhā) meaning shining intensely (dedīpyamānā) refers to these [forty-three yoginīs identified with the] mothers. [When the Verse says] "Let them enter into me" the prayer of the Poet [author] is °Let them enter into my body because it is of the form of the

śrīcakra'.[28]

[When in Verse Three it says] "as if desiring" (uśatīva) it means "as it were desirious of" (kāmayamānā iva) but in fact She is without desire (niṣkāmatvāt). Just as cows desiring to be near their calves enter quickly into the cowshed, so let these [Mothers (matara), that is, the forty-three yoginīs] enter [into me]: this is the meaning.[29] This scriptural authority (śruti) [stating in Verse Three, "Let the Mothers enter into me"] is the source (mūlam) for the injunctions concerning the nyāsa of the [śri-] cakra as established in the Tantras.[30] Because of the necessity to identify these [forty-three] female deities on the [various parts of the] body [through the process of nyāsa], it is said,

Let all those yoginīs make my body their home.[31]

This is the source of this [interidentification between the body and the śrīcakra] describing the "laying down of the Goddess" (śaktinyāsa) [in the body] and based upon the form of a mantra (śaktinyāsamantraliṅgasaṃvādāttasyāpi mūlam).

Now in order to indicate the two [sets of] lotus [petals] encircled by three lines on the remaining portion of the [sri-] cakra [as it is viewed from the perspective] of creation, the fourth verse is said.

1. The verse translated according to the interpretation of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin would read: "In whom there are nine Yonis and nine cakras and nine disciplines (yogas) and nine Yoginīs are shining. In the nine basic levels (bhūmis) there are the presiding deities of the cakras who are the guardian deities (syona), the nine Badhrās and the nine mudrās."

According to Rāmānanda: "The nine Yonis and the nine cakras are shining; there are nine conjunctions (yogas) and nine Yoginīs [presiding]; there are nine presiding deities of the cakra; [the presiding deity of the cakra] syona means °of the form of happiness'; there are nine mudrās and nine bhadrās."

For an alternative translation according to Upaniṣadbrahmayogin see Krishna-Warrier as mentioned above.

2. The threefold nature of the bindu is technically described in terms of its three primary qualities, nāda, bindu and kalā. Nāda refers to sound in its primordial sense, that is, the first unarticulated essense that preceeds the three stages of speech. It is the same as the parā aspect that subsumes the usual three forms of sound, namely, paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī. Insofar as Brahman is considered in its sound form (śabdabrahman), nāda is the term designating its latent potentiality, that is, its power to become increasingly more manifest. The second quality, bindu, indicates a technical use of the term. Like many Tantric terms, bindu is used in a variety of contexts to indicate very different types of forms or properties. (Regarding these usages see Hindu Tantrism, p.94f.) In this case bindu refers to the correlative concept nāda, it is the static or permanent element that underlies the emerging form of manifest sound. It is, as were, a "drop" (as its literal sense indicates) of concentrated power that forms the basis of the expansion (prapañca) that assumes the physical shape of sounds and the bījākṣaras of the śrīcakra. Kalā is the third aspect of the śrīcakra's central bindu. It refers to the power of particularization, that is, the inherent capacity of the One to assume many forms.

3. See Pāṇini's enumeration of the fourth verbal root given under 6.4.35.

4. An idea repeated by Bhāskararāya in his Setubandha on Yoginīhṛdaya I.12-13; cf., Amṛtānanda's Dīpikā on the same verses.

5. The detailed explanation of the icchā-, kriyā- and jñāna-śaktis is given in Part One but of immediate importance here is Bhāskararāya's effort to align the different sets of three that are part of the symbolism and meaning of the Goddess as Tripura, The Three Cities. Icchā-, kriyā- and jñāna- śaktis correspond respectively to Vāmā, Jyeṣṭhā and Raudrī as well as to paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī aspects of sound. Note however that in the next line of the text there is no mention of what corresponding male powers created Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra. The chart below

maps out the interidentifications made here.

	Śānta aspects----	Icchāśakti Kriyāśakti Jñānasakti
Bindu------------------ (with its presiding deities)	Ambikā aspects----	Vāmā Jyeṣṭhā Raudrī
	Parā aspects-----	paśyantī madhyamā vaikharī

The devolution of the universe envisioned from the bindu of the śrīcakra appears in the sets of three as shown above. Each of these correspond to a side of the inner trikona sub-cakra, that is, to the right, top and left sides of the first triangle from the bindu of the śrīcakra. By 'nine deities' transformed into the nine Yoni cakras Bhaskararaya means the nine in the three sets of three as in the chart above. As for which deity is identified with which sub-cakra of the śrīcakra he offers no correspondence. Sometimes Bhaskararaya suggests that devolution of the śrīcakra from bindu to nine entities corresponds to the central trikona and the eight minor triangles of the vasukona cakra---following this line of interpretation these would be the nine cakras which are transformations of the nine Yonis, each of which is one of the nine deities as listed.

Note that the word cakre in this line of the text is the 3rd person singular, ātmanepada of $\sqrt{}$ kṛ.

6. The alternative explanation suggests that the Goddess creates (taking dīdhire in the sense of ut+$\sqrt{}$pad) the nine Yonis as latent and realized impressions in the aspirant and corresponding to the set of nine Yoginīs that preside over the nine cakras. It is with these nine Yonis (as mental impressions) that the actual nine sub-cakras of the śrīcakra are identified and taken to be agents initiating action.

7. Bhāskararāya means the nine deities transformed into the nine Yonis are identified with the nine triangles formed by the intersection of the two śakti, downward facing triangles, with the one śiva, upward facing triangle (what he calls the Vahni triangle). This intersection of three triangles produces the vasukona of eight minor triangles plus the central trikona. The emerging portion of the śrīcakra is as below.

What Bhāskararāya means exactly by the nine Yonis throughout this discussion is never explicit but what is suggested is the power behind or within each manifestation of reality represented

by the emerging triangles. These are, in fact, aspects of the devolving supreme deity and are called Yonis by virtue of they're being triangular.

8. As shown in the diagram in note .

9. Bhāskararāya makes it clear that the remaining portions of the śrīcakra are all contained in a subtle form within these nine minor triangles created out of the initial intersection of the two major triangles as shown in note . He says first there was the undifferentiated in the form of the one bindu; subtly present was the central trikona and only then the nine minor triangles formed by the intersection of two plus one. All the remaining yoginīs identified with each set of minor triangles, he says, are present within these nine minor triangles, as are each of the yoginīs identified with each set of minor triangles that are the sub-cakras of the śrīcakra.

10. Yoginīhṛdaya, I. 36. With this quotation begins a different subject, the description of the śrīcakra in its three dimensional meru form.

11. The idea is that not only is everything below the level of Brahman but that things are arranged in a specific order of devolution corresponding to the śrīcakra. Thus Brahman identified with the bindu becomes the trikoṇa which in turn becomes the vasukoṇa and so forth.

12. See Part One for a discussion of the different forms and configurations of the śrīcakra.
Read a full stop in the text following "bhūmikaḥ".

13. These are the presiding deities of the trikona. They are identical to the nine presiding deities over the nine sub-cakras of the sricakra, namely, tripurā, tripureśī, tripurasundarī, tripuravāsinī, tripuraśrī, tripuramālinī, tripurasiddhā, tripurāmbikā and mahātripurasundarī. The list proceeds from the outermost sub-cakra, the trailokyamohana consisting of the bhugraha (i.e., the bhūpura), and moves towards the trikona. For a complete list of the identifications and names of the cakras see Part One.
Here ends the discussion in the text of the meru form of the śrīcakra.

14. Literally the word "syona" means soft, gentle or agreeable and appears to be of doubtful origins. Bhāskararāya's interpretation suggesting that it is a Vedic term is corroborated by contemporary oral traditions.

15. For a description of the nine principle mudrās and others see Part One.

16. Yoginīhṛdaya, I.12.

17. Yoginīhṛdaya, I.13. Amṛtānanda in the Dīpikā identifies the cakra here as the śrīcakra since it is ninefold. He also confirms Bhāskararāya's view that navacakreśvarī, the 'goddess of the nine cakras', means the presiding deities of each of the nine sub-cakras of the śrīcakra as described above. According to Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha, the navayoni cakra is ninefold in its subtle nature (**vāsanātāpi**), meaning the eight mantras placed on each of the eight minor triangles of the vasukona plus the mūlavidyā mantra of the bindu. Furthermore he contends that deities of the trikona if divided by three come to nine. But this elaboration mentioned here in the Setubandha (on Yoginīhṛdaya, I.13.) does not occur in the Ātmanopaniṣad as it usually known. He must have in mind another text of the same name, or this remark should be taken to be an interpolation (even though it occurs in all available manuscripts).

18. Whose opinion this is is not clear since it is not that of the Dīpikākara Amṛtānanda.

19. From the perspective of dissolution' refers to the method of describing the creation of the śrīcakra according to the samhāra, that is, from the outside towards the central bindu. Here, however, samhāra cakra refers to only the 'essential' aspect of the śrīcakra, that is, from the vasukona to the bindu. For a disscussion of the three perspectives of the śrīcakra--the creation (sṛṣṭi), preservation (sthiti) and dissolution (samhāra)--see Part One on the śrīcakra.

20. Emend **mātṛ** to **mātrā** following Adyar and GOML.

21. Emend **saratropabṛmbaṇāni** to **sarvopabṛmhaṇāni** following Adyar and GOML.

Note here that Bhāskararāya cites Tantra and calls it śruti, that is, revelation, putting it on a par with the Vedas as scriptural authority. This issue is taken up in detail in Part One.

22. Interpreted according to Upaniṣadbrahmayogin the Verse would translate: "Principally She was One, became nine, then nineteen and then twenty-nine and forty-three. Manifestly, let these three mothers as it were desirous [of doing good to their young] enter into me."

According to Rāmānanda, "She was One, becamce nine, nineteen, twenty-nine and then forty-three. Desirous and with a friendly heart, let the Mother enter into me from the mūlādhara to the other cakras." What is noteworthy here is the fact that Rāmānanda, known for his elaborate comments, offers only one short paragraph for the interpretation of the whole Verse.

23. The five physical or gross (sthūla) elements (bhūtas) are air (vāyu), water (āp), earth (pṛthvī), fire (agni) and space (ākāśa). The five subtle elements, however, are less clear. One plausible interpretation is maintained in contemporary oral traditions since there is no textual reference listing these---that is, that the five subtle elements are the corresponding subtle mantric emenations of the gross elements. This makes sense since the Goddess is spoken of in gross and subtle forms corresponding respectively to the anthropomorphic or visible shape and the 'subtle' mantra. What this means in these contexts is that it is the combination of the mantric seed-syllable identified as the subtle element with the gross element itself that brings about the tanmātras or 'mere essences'. These 'mere essences' are themselves, it would appear, in subtle and gross forms, that is as ordinary forms and as corresponding mantric aspects. The gross elements correspond to the gross tanmātras as follows:

space/ākāśa = sound/śabda
air/vāyu = touch/sparśa
fire/agni = form/rūpa
water/āp = taste/rasa
earth/pṛthvī = smell/gandha

24. Here there can be little doubt what Bhāskararāya means. The organs of action (karmendriyas) are the legs, larynx, feet, hands and sexual organ, while the organs of knowledge (jñānendriyas) are the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. The four inner organs (antaḥkaraṇa) the mind (manas), judgement (buddhi), intellect (citta) and ego (ahaṃkāra). These lists are shared by virtually all classical Hindus while the interpretation of each differs according to school.

Emend **abhavat** to **ajayanta** following Adyar and GOML.

25. Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.16. What Bhāskararāya intends here is to identify the śrīcakra's inner ten minor triangles with the ten gross (physical) and subtle elements, the outer ten minor triangles with the ten tanmātras or mere essences' and the fourteen triangles of the manvaśra (sub-) cakra with the organs of action and knowledge plus the four inner organs (as described above).

26. For Bhāskararāya the creation of the universe as the śrīcakra proceeds by an expansion up to the fourteen minor triangles of the **manvaśra** sub-cakra, that is, the one bindu becomes nine as the **trikoṇa** plus the eight minor triangles of the **vasukoṇa**; after this comes the two sets of ten minor triangles bringing the total, as he says, to twenty-nine. To these are added the outermost set of fourteen minor triangles; it is these "previously mentioned fourteen" that are identified with the five respective organs of action and knowledge and the four parts of the inner organ (**antaḥkaraṇa**) as mentioned above. The whole act of creation is, however, in microcosm found in the first

expansion to nine, the subsequent description is a mere elaboration in his eyes. What is important is the fact that the remaining portions of the śrīcakra, that is, the sets of lotus petals and the sets of lines are not included in the description thus far. Their respective roles are given later.

27. Bhāskararāya discounts the **bindu** in his calculation of the presiding deities of the śrīcakra once it expands beyond its original form. He calls the **bindu** "formless" (**nirākāra**) since it has not moved into the realm of °threes' that make up reality as we understand it ordinarily. This interpretation brings the total number of presiding deities (**yoginīs**) identified with the minor triangles to the correct number, forty-three.

Emend to read: **binducakrasyanirākāratvena ekā sāsīd ityasya yonyākṛtīnām madhye na pariganaṇam//.** This follows both Adyar and GOML in part. See the critical text and apparatus for details.

28. The 'mothers' (mātṛkās) are the yoginīs of the forty-three minor triangles of the śrīcakra.

29. Bhāskararāya has in mind the Indian belief that the cows having grazed during the day are by evening anxious to be with their young and hasten themselves back to the cowshed. The simile suggests the anxiety feeling of separated from the Mother and the hope of the devotee that the yoginīs will hasten into him during the time of puja.

30. Nyāsa, literally, "laying down", refers to the process of identification of sounds with parts of the body and the sricakra as part of the contemplative worship. See Hindu Tantrism, p.136f. for a detailed discussion of its significance in Tantric traditions.

31. This verse remains unidentified.

[VERSE FOUR]

> [There is] an upward rising flame in the midst of a circle of light which is [also] darkness itself. There is a horizontal [circle of] light that is red and is without decay.
> [She is] joy [and the] bliss [of purity] and indeed these [three] circles of radiating light [surrounding the sets of lotus petals of the *srīcakra*] make auspcious [the Mothers identified with it].[1]

Following the [sub-cakra] of fourteen [minor triangles] there are two [sub-] cakras of eight and sixteen lotus petals. In between each is a circle and exterior [to the sixteen petals] there is a circle; thus [there are] three circles. This is the conclusion reached in some Tantras.[2] Hence [there is the verse]:

> The four gateways (*catuṣkoṇa*) are of the form of Jyeṣṭhā and the three circles the form of Vama.[3]

Thus the explanation given by the ancient teachers of the words "the three circles" defined as two lotus [petal cakras] surrounded by three circles between them is appropriate.[4]

> The two groups of lotus petals surrounded by three circles have the nature of Agni and Soma according to the Śāktas, My Beloved.[5]

The explanation [that was given above for the four gateways and the three circles] is the same for this verse. "These three circles that have the three-fold form, the form of Agni, Sūrya and Soma": By the explanation given in this sense is to be understood the two lotus [petal sets] between which are the [three circles].[6] But the literal meaning is

that surrounding the cakras which follow the maintaining cakra [i.e., the final set of fourteen minor triangles] is a circle of light called jvalana, flame, [and this flame] has the nature of darkness [as it says in Verse Four described by the words] "darkness indeed" (tamo vai). By the [expression in the Verse] "upward rising flame" (ūrdhvajvala) is asserted that the form is a flame of fire (agnijvala). And it is further asserted to be a form of darkness (tamorūpatva) by the appearance of soot [arising at] the top of the flame.[7] Thus the indeclinable particle vai, indeed, is used [in the Verse] in order to avoid any doubt concerning the mention of darkness as being incongruous with its composition as light.[8]

Following that there is [explained in the Verse so as to indicate the form of the sun (sūryarūpa)] a horizontal (tiraścīnam) circle of light moving horizontally.[9] Because it is red in color, it has the quality of activity (raktatvādrajoguṇamābhūt) and that [circle of horizontal light] has the form of the sun. It is a matter of [ordinary] perception that sunlight travels horizontally and fire vertically.[10] It has been eloquently said:

> It is well known that the sun's light (anurusāratha) spreads horizontally and the fire moves vertically.[11]

The ephithet "without decay" (ajaram) [used in Verse Four to indicate the agnirūpa or form of fire] asserts the peculiar nature of a flame of fire.[12]

There then arises pleasure from the contact of subject

with object [called in Verse Four modana to indicate the form of the moon (somarūpa)] which arises as the circle of light around the moon. By the word "bliss" (ānanda) [in the Verse] the nature of its being pure is indicated. What is suggested is [not ordinary happiness but] the bliss of Brahman since there occurs an excess of purity.[13]

The [particles] u and vai [are used in the Verse] to indicate a mere vocative expression (kevalamantrane) and to add emphasis.[14]

Thus these three maṇḍalas or circles (vṛttāni) [that surround parts of the śrīcakra] cause auspciousness, that is, [as the Verse says] they ornament (mandayanti) the Mothers [who are identified on the parts of the śrīcakra]. The meaning [of this passage] is that the śrīcakra that is fit for worship (karyakṣama) should consist of the two sets of lotus petals between which are the three circles, not merely [a śrīcakra consisting of the major and minor triangles beginning with the bindu] up to the **manvaśra** [cakra, that is the sub-cakra of fourteen minor triangles]. The sense is [also] that the worship (pūjā) done from the manvaśra [cakra] up to the bindu is only for emergencies.

In order to instruct the nature of the nine gateways of the [śrī-] cakra the fifth verse is said.

[VERSE FIVE]

> [The śrīcakra is composed also of] the three lines of the outer gateways; it is the three worlds, [has the form of] the three qualities and the three illuminations.
>
> This is the city [of the Goddess]. It increases the fulfillment of those [devotees

seeking] fulfillment. It is Śiva (Madana) and the Goddess [as Madanyā].

In other Tantras the three circles are prescribed to be exterior to the two [sets of] lotus petals surrounded by two circles.[15] If that is the case then one should interpret the verse up to the words "And three lines" (tisraśca rekha) as referring to the three circles. And thus it should not be said that it is incongruous to mention the three circles as being outside the two circles [that surround the outermost set of lotus petals]. In the Tantrarāja [Tantra], taking what is stated in scripture (śruti) as its source, it is said that outside the manvaśra [sub-cakra of fourteen minor triangles] is another bordering circle different from the circle surrounding the eight petalled lotus.[16] To take the three lines [mentioned here in Verse Five] as referring to "the outermost gateways" [subsequently mentioned] is the natural meaning.[17]

[The words in Verse Five] "three worlds" (trivisthapā) means having the form of the three worlds (bhūvanātrayarūpa).[18] Or [viṣṭhapā, world] may mean the form of heaven (svargarūpa) because of its being the abode of the gods. The "three qualities" (triguṇa) means having the form of the three qualities. "Three illuminations" (triprakāśa) means the light in the form of three circles representing the Sun (sūrya), the Moon (candra) and Fire (agni). With the word "this" [in the Verse] is concluded the discussion of the śrīcakra.

By these four and a half verses are described the city, like that city of the Goddess (_śripura_) which is [identified as] the _śrīcakra_, the dwelling place of the Supreme Goddess together with Her attendents. [The _śrīcakra_] fulfills the wishes of the devotees and even the gods like Śiva, Viṣṇu and others. Hence the meaning is that on the _śrīcakra_ are _Madana_ [as He is called in Verse Five] who is Śiva or Kāmeśvara and _Madanyā_ [as She is called in the Verse] who is Śivakāmasundarī [the Goddess as consort to Naṭarāja]. They are present shining by their own lustre in the extended forms [of the powers] of _ānima_, etc.[19]

Or [the word _madanya_ in the Verse] can be split as "_madani_" plus "_a_". Long _ī_ final is added to [some] masculine words; thus it should be construed as _āprathete_. This follows from [Panini's rules].[20] In the Vedas these _gati_ and _upasarga_ are employed indifferently after the verbal root as well as before it, and are also seen separated from the verb by intervening words.

In order to indicate that the different names occuring in various places in the Puranas and Tantras all describe the forms of the Goddess, the sixth verse beginning with the words, "_madantika_", is said.[21]

[VERSE SIX]

> [The Goddess] is differently known as the Joyous, the Proud, the Auspcious and the Prosperous. And She is the Beautiful and the Pure One; the Modest, the Intelligent, the Satisfied, the Desired, the Thriving, the Wealthy, Lalitā [the Lovely].

In the Padmapurāṇa in the contexts of enumerating the places of pilgrimage of the Goddess (devītīrtha) some [of Her] forms are mentioned:

> Devī is Lalitā in Prayāg; in Laṅkā She is called Maṅgalā; in Trikūṭi Bhadrasundarī. In Karavīra She is Mahālakṣmī; similarly in Vinayaka She is Devī; in Devadāruvana She is Puṣṭhi, in Kashmir region She is Medhā while [also] Vāteśvari and Tuṣṭhi.[22]

These and other forms are in various places.

The fourteen names [listed in Verse Six] beginning with Mandantikā are inclusive of Viśālākṣī [the Goddess] in Kasi and other deities. Whatever form of a particular Goddess appears, even if it is differently known, is in reality only Her [the Supreme Śakti].

The word lālapantī [as it occurs in Verse Six] has the meaning lālapyamāna, [that is,] "differently known".[23] [Lālapanti] is used in the Sābarabhāṣya [on the Mīmāṁsakasūtras] where it says, "A case ending added to a word not yet declined has the meaning of the yet to be declined word in special instances."[24] Otherwise [if lālapantī is read as a substantive rather than as a verb] these fifteen goddesses correspond to the fifteen syllables [of the śrīvidyā mantra]. The Ātharvaṇa school reads here "siddhimata" for "śuddhimata".[25]

The seventh verse is said in order to effect the contemplative worship of the extolled Goddess.

1. Emend **maṇḍalayanti** in the Verse to **mandayanti** correcting the printing error in the Avalon text.

2. Read **katipayatantrasiddhāntaḥ** following GOML. Here Bhāskararāya makes clear that the vṛttatraya, or three lines, found on the śrīcakra are not to be placed outside the sixteen petalled lotus as it usually appears. Instead he says the three lines occur inbetween the sets of sub-cakras. Regarding the different opinions concerning the construction of the śrīcakra see Part One; in regard to the tradition of Bhāskararāya and the interpretation of this particular point of doctrine in living traditions see Part Two.

3. Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.19. Bhāskararāya here shifts to an explanation of the śrīcakra from the outer gateways of the bhūgraha towards the central bindu. Amṛtānanda observes in his Dīpikā on this verse a reading which shifts the word order thus making discussion consistent with the °inside out'explanation but does not adopt it.

4. The "ancient teaching" is reflected in the opinion of Amṛtānanda in his Dīpikā on Yoginīhṛdaya 1.19.

5. This verse has not been identified. Bhāskararāya seems to stretch the meaning of the verse since its more natural interpretation would identify the two sets of eight and sixteen lotus petals of the śrīcakra with Soma and Agni. Bhāskararāya, however, takes it as referring to the three circles, not the lotus petals, and adds the identification of the third line with Sūrya. Because the verse has not been located it is difficult to assess Bhāskararāya's interpretation.

6. Emend **vṛttānyanisūryasomaguṇa-** to **vṛttanayagnisūryasomarūpa.**

7. The idea is that when a flame burns, like a candle, there appears a kind of black, sootish residue (called in Sanskrit hajjalam) and this confirms the idea that a flame of fire (agnijvalam) to be predominanted by the tamas or dark guṇa of the material world.

8. Emend **tamasvaoktavasāñjatya** to **tamasvoktyāsāṅgatya**; also emend **ityāvyayaṃ** to **ityāvyayaṃ tat.**

9. According to this interpretation sunlight characteristicly travels horizontally while the light of a flame moves vertically.

10. To justify his interpretation that sunlight moves horizontally Bhāskararāya here quotes the kavya Māgha 1-2 as cited in the Avalon edition.

11. Māgha, 1-2.

12. Emend **-visesanamagnito vailaksanyadrdhikaraya** to **visesanamagnitejovailaksanyadrdhikaraya** following GOML. What Bhaskararaya means by the °peculiar nature' (vailaksana) of fire is that it is at once called light while at the same time is predominated by the guna of darkness (tamas) permeating its material nature---these two characteristics are in apparent contradiction since light and darkness are considered mutually exclusive of each other.

13. Emend to insert **drsthrnam** after the word **modana** following Adyar and GOML.

14. Emend **komalamantrane** to **kevalāmantrane** following GOML. Oral tradition interprets the Avalon reading of uvai iti komalamantrane to mean, 'the particles u and vai mean a gentle invitation' but the emendation seems justified and is supported by other living adepts. Komala itself has no recorded meaning.

15. Emend **tantrāntare** to **tantrāntareṣu** following Adyar and GOML.

16. Available editions of the Tantrarāja Tantra do not support Bhaskararaya's view but the text has not yet been critically and definitively edited.

17. That is, rather than taking the three lines to mean the three lines that make up the gateways of the bhūpura.

18. The word visthapā occuring here in compound with tri- appears to be another example of the author using deliberately archaic vocabulary in the text.

19. Anima, the power to make oneself small, is the first of the ten powers or siddhis acquired by identifying them with the bhūgraha during the śrīcakra pūjā. For a more complete discussion see Part One.

20. See Aṣṭādhyāyī, 4.1.81 and 4.1.82. Bhāskararāya is justifying his alternative reading of **atra madano madani āprathete** and is suggesting the antiquity of this Upaniṣad is shown by its use of Vedic grammar.

21. Emend to add **manditikyādīti** following Adyar.

22. This has not been found in Padmapurāṇa. In line one emend to omit **ityādi** following Adyar and GOML; in line six place a full stop following **ityādīni**. Regarding the pīthas or seats of the Goddess in various pilgrimage centers see Sircar, D.C., The Śākta Pithas. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, 1973.

23. The form **lālapyamānā** which occurs in all consulted manuscripts appears to be ungrammatical. It is taken to be present participle of the causative of the verbal root √**lap**.

According to Rāmānanda, "The meaning is that the qualities of the Supreme Kāmeśvara [Śiva] are enumerated without interference." The text reads in Sanskrit **ajasram niravadhikaparkāmeśvaraguṇānamredayantītyarthaḥ.** Bhāskararāya's interpretation is not entirely clear and I have followed Rāmānanda's suggestion which does not seem opposed to Bhāskararāya.

24. See the Mīmāṁsakasūtras, 1.1.25, according to the Avalon edition's note.

25. This follows Upaniṣadbrahmayogin's interpretation even though he identifies the text with the Ṛg Veda like Bhāskararāya. Since Bhāskararāya attributes the different reading to a difference between the two Vedic schools it is not clear, in light of Upaniṣadbrahmayogin, if this is actual distincition.

[VERSE SEVEN]

> Knowing this [Supreme Goddess] as [residing within the] very seat [of the body, i.e., the śrīcakra] they please [Her] being intoxicated with ambrosial wine [they are to drink].
> [Her devotees are established] on the outskirts of the Great Heaven and enter into the Supreme Abode of the Three Cities.

[The word] this (f.) [in Verse Seven] means the Supreme Deity. "Knowing" (vijñaya) means knowing (jñātva) preceded by the special injunctions, that is, making [Her] one's own by the contemplative worship (upāsti) which is preceded by initiation (dīkṣā), service to the Teacher, etc. [The word] "one's own seat" (svapīṭha) means the śrīcakra which is not different than one's own body. There [in the body] resides the Goddess with Her attendents [described in the Verse as] "surrounded by nectar" (sudhayā parisrutā), that is, with the substances make like ambrosia [by showing the dhenamudrā at the time of the food offering (naivedya) during the śrīcakra pūjā].[1]

[The word] pleasing (tarpayanta) refers to those performing worship (pūjāyanti) with offerings (upacaraiḥ) such as liquid oblations (tarpandādi), etc.; they enjoy' (mandanti) means they enjoy (bhajanti) the conceptionless object as the one object identified with one's own Self, preceeded by the enjoyment of contemplating objects.[2] The meaning [of the second line of the Verse] is that those [who enjoy their own Self as conceptionless] dwell on the outskirts of the great heaven and enter into the supreme

abode called Traipura. Here [the notion of] making ambrosial [substances used in the ritual] is indicative of other ritual performances [such as the showing of mudrās during the pūjā].[3] Thus that ambrosial goddess (sudhadevī) is one's own personal deity (abhimānadevatā) and is understood as symbolized in the letters of the mantra of the ritual [which transforms it into ambrosia].[4] In the Rudrayāmala it is said:

> Purification is by the ritual mantra (mantrasaṃskāra) and that alone is called ambrosia (amṛta).[5]

[When the Verse says] "dwelling on the outskirts of the great heaven" [this is] indicative of achieving the fruits of the three human aims [in life, namely, dharma, artha and kāma]. The supreme abode [called in the Verse traipura] has for its very nature that which leads to liberation [but] actually it is liberation (mokṣa) itself that is indicated. The sense is that [upāsakas] obtain liberation as well as all [worldly] desires. In the Devībhāgavatasmṛti it says,

> It is said that, "Thus Śakti is omnipresent, She is Brahman." The wise have spoken of Her as twofold, "[She is] with qualities and without qualities". Those with desires should worship (pūjya) Her with qualities but those devoid of desire as without qualities. She, the Faultless One, is the Governess over dharma, artha, kāma and liberation. Or [it can be said] having been worshipped preceded by the appropriate injunctions, She gives all desired aims.[6]

Before one is to perform the pūjā he [or she] is to be initiated into Śrīvidyā.[7] He [or she] must have some substances [with which to perform the pūjā] and do arcana to

his [or her] own body (svapītha). He [or she] should enjoy all desires in conceptionless state of mind (nirvikalpa-vṛttidvara). This is the source of the scriptural reference (śrutimūlam) for the selective injunction prescribed in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra etc., such as, "Only an intelligent person is to be initiated".[8] Even though [a selective injunction] is revealed (śrutam), the specially qualified person [hearing such statements as in the Verse,] "Knowing, they please" [should understand that] the pleasing [of a deity or the ritual of tarpana] is related to the result of contemplation (bhāvanā) like [in the phrase] "the givers of gold enjoy immortality".[9] [The sense of the phrase, "Knowing, they please" as it occurs in the Verse] as an injunction has not been vitiated simply because it is [technically not an injunction but] a declarative statement (mantratve'pi) since the result is obtained only by this statement [and is not obtained from another source] and because an injunctive [sense] and a technical interpretation (śakti) are not opposed [to such an interpretation]. In examples like, "the chaṭaka birds are sacrificed for spring" or "the able should be led to help the needy" [or] "the knowers of [a] face (asya) are called discriminating minds", all such declarative statements [intimate] the injunctive sense [and it] is in most cases attributed.[10] In fact, the word mandanti [meaning "one pleases"] taken in the Vedic subjunctive tense is only a declarative statement [not an

injunction] but here assumes an imperative sense by the logic [explained] in the chapters concerning bhavārtha [in the Mīmāṁsakasūtras] like in the case of the statements concerning Agni; it should be taken with the meaning of the verbal root √mad [meaning 'to be intoxicated'] alone is [understood to be] undifferentiated from the Goddess [identified] as consciousness (ciddevī).[11]

The expressed meaning of the word "internal sacrifice" (antaryāga) is of that [sort, namely a bhavārtha as in the previous case] because the verbal root √yaj [which expresses the sense of performing a sacrifice in the compound antaryāga] expresses a special type of mental modification (vṛtti) [rather than the strictly external form of ritual].

Even the word "wine" (pariśruta) [used in the Verse] taken in the metaphorical sense of an object which possesses it (matvārthalakṣaṇā) is to be construed as having a verbal meaning [in the sense of "one should drink wine"].[12] Despite the fact that [wine] distinguishes both [types] of contemplative activity [namely, external and internal sacrifices] it is to be construed as only a partial [qualification referring to only the one external contemplative action] as in the dictum of the year old calf of red color and yellow eye.[13]

[The words in the Verse] "on the outskirts of the [great] heaven" (nākasya pṛṣṭha) should be construed with

the sense of the verb °establishing' (pratitiṣṭhānti) [since they are in need of verb to form a complete sentence]. [The word] "and" indicates a collection of other fruits [including the puruṣārthas]. Here the qualification [to dwell in the Three Cities] is dependent upon one being connected [previously with dwelling on the outskirts of the great heaven] like [in the analogous case where it is stated] "Only by purification [first performed] does the radiant one (tejasvin) gain supernatural power and wealth." The sense is that the result is the accumulation of all human aims (vyāsajyavṛtti) as in the case [of the phrase] "from all desires" [where the results] are not connected to an individual [cause] by a single [effect]. By the dictum that the result being incomplete is [subordinate to another principle which yields] as it were a complete result, so "pleasing" (tarpantu) [as it is used in the Verse] is only an accessory [result of worship but not its final aim and is dependent on the latter].[14]

[When the Verse says] "knowing this (f.)" [it means that] being knowledgable is a distinctive trait of one who is qualified (adhikāritavacchedako'dharmaḥ). In this case the Samayācārasmṛti applies:

> Those twice-born persons without initiation into the tradition (**kula**) are not qualified.[15]

Here [in Verse Seven] the use of the present participle with [the word] "pleasing" (tarpayanta), as it is stated in

the injunction regarding external sacrifice which we give [in Verse Twelve as] "offering food, taking for oneself", [is like] these two words using the present participle and _lyap_-endings in regard to offerings made to the Goddess and taking [the offering] for oneself; the scripture intends [first] to enjoin the offering to the deity (_divyapana_) and not to enjoin the offering for oneself (_vīrapana_). Therefore,

> Drinking is said to be threefold: divinie, heroic and ordinary. Divine is the drinking [done ritually] in front of the Goddess, heroic [drinking] is performed [ritually at the end of the **pūjā** when you have dismissed the Goddess] from the place of worship.[16]

For this _smṛti_ source there should be another [collaborating] revelation (_śruti_). But [ordinary drinking of spirits outside the ritual contexts] is a negation of the four human aims since it has for its object the attainment of desire (_rāga_) [and] need not be described in the prescriptions of ritual sacrifice.[17]

> By whatever means the intellect (_citta_) should be identified with Siva, so by any means the mind (_manas_) should be identified with Kṛṣṇa.[18]

By verses like these found in the Puranas the intention is only [to specify] desires such as these [noble efforts not ordinary desires]. From many sources such as these comes the clear mention of the injunctions [of the _śrīcakra_

pūjā] as referring to all castes (sarvavarṇa). What is pointed out (itidik) [but not elaborated upon here] is that with reference to these many statements [concerning the applicability of injunctions] there is no scope for a discussion of the strengths or weaknesses of the injunctions. This is due to the fact that they occur either directly in the recollected scriptures (smṛti) or they are based on the revealed scriptures (śruti).

Thus having prescribed the contemplative worship (upāsti) of the Supreme form the eighth verse is said with the desire to indicate the worship of the subtle form (sūkṣmarūpa) of the Goddess.[19]

[VERSE EIGHT]

> [The śrīvidyā mantra is esoterically revealed through the words] Desire, womb, lotus, wielder of the thunderbolt, cave, [followed by the letters] "ha" [and] "sa", the wind, cloud and Indra [Lord of the gods].
>
> Again [within the mantra occurs the syllable indicated by] cave [then] "sa", "ka" [and] "la" and Māyā---this is the Primordial Mantra [or Original Knowledge], Mother of the Universe, the Ancient.

Here the fifteen lettered mantra [i.e., the śrīvidyā] is revealed (uddhriyate). That [mantra] is described by the term knowledge (vidyā) because it is of the feminine gender and has the form of consciousness (cidrūpa).

In some places the Gāyatrī [mantra], the Mother of the Vedas, is recited explicitly even though it is the same

[from the esoteric point of view as the śrīvidyā mantra and thus secret and not usually revealed].[20] And Her [mantra] some instruct by words other than the explicit syllables in order to convey the deep secrecy (atirahasyatvam) of the mantra. Through this it is suggested that the qualified person and their actions are likewise [kept deeply secret]. In the Tripurātāpini [Upaniṣad] it has been clearly stated that the Gāyatrī [mantra] designates the original knowledge [or mantra, ādividyā] so why elaborate [unnecessarily here]? Even the first verse of the [Devī-] Bhāgavata supports this:

> I praise the original knowledge whose form is omniscience, let [it] instill our minds.[21]

> Because this mantra is deeply secret it should be learned only at the feet of a teacher.

[The words] mātariśva and kāmā [as they occur in Verse Eight] indicate the syallables of the Four-faced One (caturmukhavācakāmakṣaram) [i.e., the god Brahma].[22] [The words] kamalā and yoni [indicate] the fourth and eleventh vowels [i.e., the long "i" and "e" as they are contained in the mantra].[23] [The words] indra and vajrapāni [represent] the third of the semivowels [i.e., "la"].[24] [The words] guhā and māyā [represent] the seed [syllable] of [the Goddess] Bhuvaneśvarī [i.e., hrīṃ]. [The word] abhra [represents] the letter "ha" [which is also] the first letter of the previous [seed syllable (bījākṣara) of Bhuvaneśvarī]. The remaining five [syllables of the mantra]

are in their own [explicit] form [rather than represented by another esoteric term].

This original knowledge [or primordial mantra] is [called in Verse Eight] puruci [meaning] ancient (puratāni).[25] Mother of the Universe (viśvamata) [as it occurs in the Verse] means the creator of the world (jagajjanayitri). In the Yoginīhṛdaya's section on the traditional meaning (sampradāyārtha) the creation of the world by the syllables of [this śrīvidyā] mantra (vidya) has been elaborated in detail.[26] But the meaning of the mantra has been variously explained in different Tantras according to the various [twelve forms it takes as it was revealed through the twelve sages and gods] beginning with Agastya, Dattātreya, etc.[27] And [the form and meaning of] the mantra grasped according to my own interpretation has been presented in the Varivasyarahasya and so should be understood [as it is presented there].[28]

In order to indicate the mantra (vidyā) of the contemplative worship (upāsitam) of [the followers of] Lopamudrā and the mantra worship of [the followers of] Kāmarāja, the ninth verse is said.

1. Emend **tatra** to **tatratya** following Adyar and GOML.

2. Emend **viṣayabhānapramosapūrvakam** to **viṣayabhāvanapramodapūrvakam** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **bhāvanti** to **bhajanti** following GOML.

3. Emend **amṛtokaraṇam** to **itham amṛtīkaraṇam**.

4. Emend **tadābhimānnidevatāyām** to **tadābhimānadevatāyāḥ** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **saṃvicca** to **saṃjñaca**.

5. This quotation is not found in the printed editions of the Rudrayamala but the title is often used as a catch-all for stray verses without clear attribution. This may be the case here.

6. These verses attributed to Devībhāgavata have not been located.

7. The word śrīvidyā may also be interpreted as meaning the mantra. Thus one must first be initiated into the śrīvidyā mantra; but the suggestion here seems more encompassing and it has been taken in the broader sense of the larger initiation process.

8. Paraśurāmakalpasūtra, 1.31.

9. A °selective injunction' is understood here as the subject of the sentence.

The example of the °givers of gold' is intended to make clear the connection between the action and its direct result. Contemplation (bhāvanā) spoken of here yields its results as directly is what is suggested.

The entire passage beginning with the words **vastuto madantītyasya** to **na vīrapanavidhau** is unclear but it attempts to explain "knowing, they please". One should first "know" the preliminaries and details of the ritual and then "please", taking the Upaniṣad which is merely a declarative statement (i.e., a mantra-statement) in the sense of an injunctive (i.e., a vidhi-statement). This is justified because the act of pleasing is only for the sake of obtaining liberation and not for the worldly end of obtaining gold.

10. Emend **pranīyādi** to **praṇīyād**.

11. The meaning of agneyavākya is not entirely clear. Concerning the statements relating to Agni and the homa-sacrifices, in these a third person indicative ending is used but the Vedic interpreters (according to the Bṛhatī, p.286) have concluded that such agneyavākyas should be taken as if they are imperatives. In other words by assuming the imperative for the indicative third person present mandanti meaning 'he pleases' it should be taken to mean 'he should please'. According to oral

traditions the verbal root √mad, to be intoxicated, has an imperative sense here indicating a kind of activity related only to one's own self as it is identified with the universal consciousness, thus by pleasing oneself one pleases the universal deity. Concerning Bhāskararāya's remark: °by the logic [explained] in the chapter [in the Mīmāmsa texts] concerning bhavārtha' see the Bṛhatī with Prabhākāra's commentary, the chapter entitled bhavārthadhikārana in Bṛhati of Prabhākāra Miśra (on the Mīmāṁsaka Sūtrabhāṣya of Śābara) with the Ṛjuvimālā Pañcika of Śālikanātha. Edited by S.Subrahmanya Sastri. Madras: University of Madras Publications, 1962, p.286.

12. Matvārthalakṣaṇā is a type of metaphorical interpretation but it is not to my knowledge explained in textual sources. Oral tradition explains: 'Like other instances of lakṣaṇā here too a secondary or metaphorical interpretation is necessary because the primary sense of the word does not fit. Matvārthalakṣaṇā is that type of metaphor in which a word signifying a particular object is interpreted as signifying what possesses that object. It is called 'possessing the object' (matvārtha-) because the object (artha) possesses by virtue of the sense of the suffix mat. For example, when we say soma sacrifice' (somayāga) a doubt arises as to how it should be interpreted. Does it mean that it is a sacrifice qualified by the presence of soma or does it mean that it is a sacrifice in the form of soma. In other words, instead of saying that the sacrifice is qualified by soma it could be said that the sacrifice is the soma itself and thereby suggesting the primary sense of the word soma. This argument is refuted by asserting that soma is a substance (dravya) to be used in a sacrifice and as such it cannot be identified with the sacrifice itself since it is a mere accessory (aṅga) to it. Thus the primary sense of the word soma cannot give a coherent meaning to the sentence and lakṣaṇā must be resorted to, which is to say that soma means somavat, that is, that which possesses soma. Now here the word 'wine' referring to the sacrifice in which it is found as an accessory is further interpreted as being in the imperative sense.'

13. The sense here is also not clear and the translation follows oral interpretations of the text. The dictum (nyāya) used by Bhāskararāya is explained in oral tradition: °In the Taittīrya Saṁhitā 6.1.6.7. there is a statement, 'He purchases a year old calf of red color and yellow eye'. Here the one year old calf is the primary consideration of the purchase but not the red color and the yellow eye which are only accidental. These characteristics, therefore, are not the conditions for purchase but they do distinguish this calf for sale from any other. Similarly in this sentence the one contemplative activity alone is important and not any of the accidental characteristics which are only partial descriptions of it.'

14. See Apte, V.S., The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Revised and enlarged edition, Poona, 1957, reprinted Kyoto, Japan: Rinsen Book Company, 1978, Appendix E, p.57. Here the dictum is rephrased but conveys a similar notion: **phalavatsānnidhavaphalam tandangam.** Also cf., Śābarabhāṣya on Mīmāṁsakasūtras, 4.4.19. Note that Bhāskararāya uses the identical dictum to make a similar point in the Setubandha on Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, I.125.

15. This reference to the Samayācārasmṛti is particularily interesting since it suggests a sectarian literature associated with the Samaya school of Śrīvidyā. Among historical commentators Lakṣmīdhara is the best known Samayācārin and one might expect this quotation to turn up in his commentary on the Saundaryalaharī since no text of this title is recorded. This is not the case and the verse remains unidentified. It is also not possible to state definitively that the work's title confirms the existence of literature belonging exclusively to the Samaya school since samayācāra' might well only mean 'those who practice with discipline' and there are no other specific Samaya works other than ritual handbooks (paddhatis and nibandhas).

16. This passage is unidentified.

17. Bhāskararāya here explains why the third type of drinking, pasupana or creaturely drinking' is not discussed.

18. In the following line Bhāskararāya says this verse occurs in the Puranas but it remains as yet unidentified.

19. Verse Eight of the Upaniṣad is quoted by Bhāskararāya in his Saubhāgyabhāskara, the commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma I.17. Here the text is called Tripurāsūkta and is said to be part of the Ātharvanapatha, that is, belonging to the Ātharvaṇa school. Regarding other names given to the text and its belonging to both Ṛg and Ātharvaṇa schools see the Introduction to Part Three.

20. Kanthavena has no recorded meaning in lexicons. Oral traditions assert that it means 'explicitly' or 'clearly' which certainly fits the contexts of the sentence.
On the identification of the Śrīvidyā mantra with the famous Vedic gāyatrī see Part One.

21. This verse is not found in known editions of the Devībhāgavatam. What is noteworthy is the fact that the verse itself imitates the structure and meter of the Ṛg Vedic gāyatrī, a pattern that other gāyatrīs also follow. These mantras are especially important in the worship of particular aspects of gods found in more localized contexts. In Cidambaram, for example, a gāyatrī is designed for the consort of Naṭarāja, Śivakāmasundarī, and is passed as secret lore among the traditional priests.

22. Bhāskararāya begins to reveal the fifteen lettered form of the Śrīvidyā mantra here by making oblique references to certain deities associated with specific syllables. This is the technique of initiates who will usually not make explicit the mantra itself either by writing it or uttering it aloud. The code, however, is quite clear provided the clues are carefully considered in the setting of oral tradition and the mantraśāstra. The words mātariśvā and kāma both indicate the syllable ka associated with the four-faced god Brahma.

23. Sixteen vowels are counted here making the long ī and e the fourth and eleventh respectively. They are: **a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ, e, o, ai, au, aṃ** (anusvāra) and **aḥ** (visarga).

24. Counting the semi-vowels as four, namely, **ya, ra, la** and **va**, **la** is the third.

This completes the first kūṭa or set of syllables in the fifteen lettered Śrīvidya mantra as shown below.

Matarisava/Kama = **ka**
Yoni = **e**
Kamala = **ī**
Indra/Vajrapani = **la**
Bhuvanesvari
bijaksara = **hrīṃ**

These syllables viewed successively are the first five elements of the kādi-version of the srividya, making up the first kuṭa.

In the second kūṭa the mantra is revealed somewhat differently:

svarūpa or in its 'own [explicit] form' = **ha**
svarūpa also = **sa**
Mātariśvā = **ka**
Abha = **ha**
Indra = **la**
Punarguhā (literally 'the secret again')
the **bījākṣara** of **Bhuvaneśarvī** = **hrīṃ**

In the third kūṭa the first three letters are in their explict forms while the **Bhuvansesvari bījākṣara** is identified with the goddess as **Māyā**, thus the kuṭa reads **sa, ka, la, hrīṃ**.

The śrīvidyā itself in its kādividyā form is complete:

ka e ī la hrīṃ
ha sa ka ha la hrīṃ
sa ka la hrīṃ

For a complete discussion see Part One.

25. Purūci is an obscure term and it would appear that this is yet another effort to portray the Upaniṣad as an ancient, indeed, an archaic work. Neither Upaniṣadbrahmayogin nor Rāmānanda offer much elucidation on the meaning of the term, the translation follows Bhāskararāya's gloss.

26. See _Yoginīhṛdaya_, II.26ff and the _Setubandha_. Here each letter of the mantra is assigned a mystical identification with various aspects of the universe.

27. The twelve forms of the mantra are discussed in Part One.

28. _Varivasyarahasya and its commentary Prakāśa by Śrī Bhāskararāya Makhin_, edited with English translation by Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library and Research Center, 1934, fourth edition 1976.

[VERSE NINE]

> [Replacing] the three root [syllables of each kūta] of this [Kāmarāja kādividyā mantra as described in the previous verse with the letters ha, sa and ka represented by the words] six, seven and fire (vahni or Siva) they [i.e., the devotees come to] dwell [in the Lopamudrā hādividyā mantra].
>
> Praising the Lord, Desire, the Imagined, the [One] Explained [in the Vedas], they enjoy immortality.

[The word] "of this" (f.) (asya) [as it occurs in Verse Nine] means of this mantra' (vidyā). The three root [syllables] (mūlatrikam) means the three [first] syllables of the first [kūta or line of the mantra].[1] [The word] "replacing" (unmulya) is to be supplied [after the word mūlatrikam as it occurs in the Verse]. In place of [the first three syllables of the mantra as it is described in Verse Eight] by substituting the three letters beginning with the sixth [syllable of the Kāmarāja vidyā as Verse Eight has given it], those who do silent repetition (japaka) by either of [these] two mantras [either as described according to the Kāmarāja vidyā in Verse Light or with the alterations of the Lopamudrā vidyā as it is here, praise] the body (upādhikam) of the Supreme Śiva whose nature is pure.[2]

[The word] tuṣṭhuvāṁsaḥ (literally, "those who praise") means pra[illegible]ing, that is, doing silent repetition [of the mantra]. [When the Verse says they] enjoy immortality [it means] one should attain liberation by the silent repetition

of the mantra (vidyā).[3] Īśa, the Lord, is explained as kāma, desire. [This is explained] with reference to the discussion (pratpadya) in the scripture under the heading of Īkṣata [that is, in the Brahmasūtras where] it has resolved to say, "He desired, let me be many, let me procreate."[4]

[The word] "imagined" (kalpakam) [as it occurs in Verse Nine] refers to the presiding [deity] of the mentally constructed world as it is discussed [in the Brahmasūtras] under the heading [which begins with the sūtra], "Birth, etc."[5] Omniscient (kavi) [in the Verse] means the creator of the Veda (vedapraṇetaram) [i.e., Siva].[6]

Kathyam means one to be understood only through the Vedas as it has been discussed [in the Brahmasūtras] under the heading [which begins with the sūtra], "Śāstrayoni". What has been mentioned [there] as the two letters is [identified as] the Supreme Brahman. This is the special meaning submitted here.[7]

[In Verse One] beginning with the words "deathless, ancient" [She has been described] with the qualities of Brahman [i.e., in the neuter gender] while here [in this Verse She] is mentioned in the masculine gender, and in the forthcoming verse on kāmakalā meditation in the feminine gender. Thus there are three types of meditation (dhyāna) prescribed on the Supreme Deity. This is similarly collaborated in the Kulārṇava [Tantra]:

> The Devī should be recalled either in the masculine form or conceived in the feminine form;

otherwise one should meditate on the partless (niṣkalā) characterized as being consciousness and bliss.[8]

Even though it is said, "One should meditate on the partless (niṣkalā) [aspect] as the supreme contemplative worship (paropāsti), on the masculine form as the subtle contemplative worship (sūkṣmopāsti) and on the feminine form as the external sacrifice (bahiryāga)", and this division is well-documented, still since it will be [later] stated that the masculine and feminine are of equal priority [meditation on one or the other] is an option [to be] chosen following one's own tradition (sampradāya).[9] With reference to the other vidyās (i.e., the mantras) worshipped (upāsita) by Manu, Candra and others as mentioned in the Tripurātāpini [Upaniṣad], in the present contexts the mention of these two [i.e., the mantras of Kamaraja and Lopamudra only] suggests their importance. Hence in the Jñānārṇava [Tantra], having considered the twelve kinds of vidyās it has been corroborated:

> O Auspicious One, these two vidyās are difficult to obtain even for the gods.[10]

Of these two [vidyās] because the kādividyā [i.e., the Kāmarāja mantra] has been described first its priority (adhikya) is suggested. The Brahmapurāṇa supports this view:

> Just as the Kādi [mata texts are supreme [among the Tantric texts] so the śrīvidyā is supreme and likewise the kādi [mantra] is supreme.[11]

In fact it has been well established by me in the Setubandha since all vidyās are not different, a comparison of one to another is merely for the sake of praising [one and encouraging its performance].[12] Therefore the Auspicious Bhāgavatpāda [Śaṅkarācārya] in the Saundaryalaharī has presented these two [vidyās] in the reverse order [that is, he has presented the Lopamudrā hādividyā version first in the text].[13] Even there [in the Saundaryalaharī] in order to follow this scripture (śruti) the words [in verse 32 of that text], śiva, śakti, kāma, smāra, yoni and lakṣmī are interpreted by some differently, but that should not be accepted since it is faulty (kliṣtva) and meaningless (nirāryakatva).[14]

Since in the present contexts internal sacrifice (antaryāga) is the subject, the mention in Verse Twelve of the substances [employed in that internal sacrifice] suggests they have a different set of qualities [than the material offerings]. In those contexts what is said is that the silent repetition [of the mantra] prescribed in the middle of that [internal sacrifice] is to be considered a subordinate aspect of internal sacrifice.[15]

[The phrase in Verse Nine] "they enjoy the immortal" (amṛtam bhajante) is a statement of inducement just like [the inducement] of hearing about a sinless world [gained as the result of performing good deeds].[16] Even though [the

said [to be individually different], when considered in particular contexts there is no choice [as to which fruits will be gained or not by each form of worship] just as in the case of the six types of fire sacrifice where the results are accrued collectively and not severally. So it is said,

> The householder should always perform the internal sacrifice and the external sacrifice [as well as] worship (arcanam) of the king of cakras [i.e., the śrīcakra], silent repetition of the vidyā and praising [Her] names [such as in the Lalitāsahasranāma]. They said that the actions of the devotee are for none other than his prosperity.[19]

But it is also said that internal sacrifice and silent repetition of the mantra alone bring about results in accordance with the special qualities of the qualified. [By analogy we observe that] for those who know this dictum, in the absence of the combination of the cake offerings with the agnisoma, the non-soma sacrificer [too] achieves results.[20]

Now the Tenth Verse is said beginning with the words "the three worlds" (triviṣṭhapam) in order to prescribe the contemplative worship (upāsti) of the physical [form] of the principle deity conceived as inwardly having qualities (antarsaguṇatvena); in order to establish [Her] on the external [form] of the [śrī-] cakra and in order to indicate [Her] physical characteristics (sthūlaviśeṣam).

[VERSE TEN]

I praise the Mother of the Universe [who dwells in] the three worlds, on the three sides [i.e., the triangles] consisting of nine lines in the middle of which is the vowel "aḥ" (visarga).
She shines as the primordial sixteenth **nityā** [present] in the midst of the city [i.e., the śrīcakra, She who is] great [and the cause of] the fifteen tithis.

After the word 'lines' (rekhā) [in the Verse] the sixteenth vowel [that is, the] visarga is to be retained [rather than assimilated according to the rules of grammatical combination, i.e., sandhi]. [The sense of the words 'the nine lines' in the Verse is that] in the [midst of] nine lines are the forms of the nine Yonis in the middle of which is placed the vowel 'aḥ' [that is, the visarga]. [An] alternative [explanation is that] the nine lines refer to the lines counted as nine that make up the saṃhāra cakra [that is, the eight minor triangles of the vasukoṇa cakra plus the central triangle] in the middle of which is the place indicated by the vowel 'aḥ'. Or the letter (akṣara) [i.e., the vowel 'aḥ'] can be divided grammatically to mean that the [vowel] 'aḥ' is that in which the very form of the vowel (svara) is the letter 'a' (akāra). That is to say that [the compound] 'the three sides' (trimukham) is just such a type of triangle, that is a triangle in the middle [of which is the vowel 'aḥ'].

This is as much as to say [that in the middle of the central triangle of the śrīcakra] is the place of worship (pūjāsthānām), the place where [She] dwells [called in the

verse] "the three worlds" (triviṣṭhapam) [and there is the Goddess] Tripurasundarī [literally the 'Beauty of the Three Cities', called in the Verse] the Mother of the Universe (viśvamātuḥ). Here the place [designated in the Verse as the three worlds] explicitly refers to heaven (svarga) which is the abode of the gods.

"I praise" (taḍīle) [in the Verse] is a poetic expression (iti stoturvakyam). According to the prescriptions of Vedic grammar (prātiśākhya) "la" is the substitute of "ḍa" [when it is said], "The letter "la" is [substitute] when the letter "ḍa" occurs between two vowels."[21] This same reading of the Upanisad [with reference to "īle"-ending on the verb] is also followed by the members of the Ātharvaṇika school. But in their opinion there is no such substitution of "la" [for "da"].[22] What is suggested is that by saying the [vowel] 'aḥ' should be in the middle [of the central triangle of the śrīcakra] the remaining fifteen vowels should be placed on the three lines [of the central triangle] surrounding the bindu [in the center].[23] [This is] according to the dictum, "It should be [distributed] equally", [these fifteen vowels] are placed [on each of the three sides of the central triangle] five to a side.

That [central] triangle is [called in the Verse] great (bṛhad) because it is imagined that the fifteen tithis who are the fifteen deities of the lunar days of the month,

[identified as those] beginning with Kāmeśvarī and ending with Citrā, are eternal (nityā) [and] shine (bibhartti) [as called mentioned also in the Verse]. The intention is that one should perform the worship (pūjā) of the [fifteen] nityās [i.e., the 'eternal' deities identified with the tithis, identifying] five on each of the right, upper and left sides [of the central triangle of the śrīcakra].[24] This has been corroborated in Jñānārṇava [Tantra]:

> And that is imagined as great (mahat). The three [sets of [nityādevatās] in the order of right, upper and left [sides] should be inscribed on the [three] lines, five each respectively. One the right [side line] should be imagined the five beginning with [the deity Kāmeśvarī whose seed-syllable (bījākṣara)] is "a" and ending with [the deity Vahnī whose seed-syllable is] "u"; then on the upper [side] the group beginning with "ū" [that is, Maheśvarī]; on the left are inscribed the five beginning with Sakti [i.e., "e", "o", "ai" and "au"] up to the anusvāra [i.e.,"aṃ"] and is the middle is worshipped the visarga [i.e., "aḥ"] as the sixteenth.[25]

The phases of the moon capable of waxing and waning are fifteen and they alone are the tithis. In other Tantras it is said:[26]

> And from the new moon to the full moon the phases (kalā) are exactly fifteen.[27]

This [central triangle is identified with] "seeing, seen and seer", as in the Taittīriya Brāhmaṇa and elsewhere.[28] The sixteenth phase known as sādākhya (literally, "said always to exist") being without waxing and waning is th. cause of all the other [fifteen]. And that [sādākhya], the sixteenth identified with the unity Supreme

Goddess and Śiva] being the cause of the fifteen nityās is called the Original Nityā (ādinityā).

[The word] She [in the Verse] has been described previously as Tripurasundarī and others, the very form (svarūpa) of nityā.[29] [The compound puramadhyam as it occurs in the Verse is interpreted: She is identified on] the place of the visarga vowel, that is, in the middle (madhyam) of the city (pura) which is the śrīcakra [and there She] shines (bibhartti), that is to say, [She] is present (adhyāste). This [interpretation] is to be considered proper because the letter "ha" having the form of Illumination (prakāśa, identified with Śiva) and Reflection (vimarśa, identified with Śakti) has the very nature of that sixteenth vowel.

In order to instruct in these present contexts the meditation on Kāmakalā associated with external sacrifice (bahiryāga), the Eleventh Verse is said.[30]

1. The three syllables are **ka**, **e** and **ī**.

2. Śiva here in His supreme aspect is viewed from the saguṇa perspective, that is, as having qualities, the predominant quality (guṇa) being purity (sattva). From the saguṇa perspective Śiva has assumed upādhis, limitations, that give Him His conceptual form.

The substitution intended by Bhāskararāya puts the sixth, seventh and eighth syllables of the kādividyā srīvidyā, **ha**, **sa** and **ka** in place of the first three syllables, **ka**, **e** and **ī**. The hādividyā śrīvidyā then is:

ha sa ka la hrīm
ha sa ka ha la hrīm
sa ka la hrīm

3. Note that the word tusthuvāṁsaḥ is a Vedic form derived from the verbal root √stu, to praise. It is the parismaipada of the perfect participle in the sense of an agent, that is, °those who praise'. See MacDonnell, A.A., Vedic Grammar. Delhi: Indological Book House, reprint edition, 1968, p.363.

Bhāskararāya interprets the verb bhajante, third person plural present ātmanepada of √bhaj, with an injunctive sense. He glosses it with bhavayet, the third person singular optative parasmaipada of √bhū, to be.

4. Following Śaṅkarācārya's division of the Brahmasutras the adhikāraṇa is called īksatyadhikāraṇa beginning at 1.1.5 and ending at 1.1.12. Bhāskararāya extends the adhikāraṇa to at least 1.1.16 where this quotation from the Taittīriya Upaniṣad occurs, cf., Taittīriya Upaniṣad, 2.6.

5. Called janmādyadikāraṇa, it is Brahmasūtra, 1.1.2-1.1.4.

6. The standard Śaiva point of view is expressed here, namely that Śiva is the creator of the Vedas. The Vedas in Śaiva-Śākta theology are apauraṣeya insofar as they are not of human origin.

7. The śāstrayoni adhikāraṇa is Brahmasūtras 1.1.3-1.1.4.

8. Kulārṇava Tantra, 4.114-115.

9. The quotation is unidentified. Emend **japet** to **sūkṣmopāstau** following Adyar.

10. Jñānarṇava Tantra, 12.4.

11. This reference to Brahmānda Purāna is actually Lalitāsahasranāma, I.17cd. Lalitāsahasarnāma is considered a portion of the Purāna.

12. cf., Setubandha on Yoginīhrdaya, 1.24 where the qualification for the śrīvidyā is discussed; also Yoginīhrdaya, 2.14 where Bhāskararāya refers to the differing opinions concerning kādi- and hādividyās.

13. See Saundaryalaharī, 32-33. Bhāskararāya's point is that since both mantras are of equal status Śankara has chosen to present **hādividyā** first though kādividyā is given priority. Among the commentators on Saundaryalaharī only Laksmidhara interprets verse 32 as kādividyā---all others including Kaivalyāśrama and Kamesvarapandita take it to indicate hādividyā.

14. Bhāskararāya clearly sides with Kaivalyāśrama and the other commentators who interpret verse 32 of Saudaryalaharī as hādividyā and discredits Lakṣmīdhara whom he may well have had in mind since he is aware of the Samayācāra school's interpretations.

Emend to add **smarayonīlakṣmipādānām** after **śivaśaktikāmapadānām** following Adyar.

15. Emend **prakaranitvena** to **praharanatvena** following Adyar and GOML; also emend **patitasya** to **paṭhitasya** following GOML.

16. According to oral traditions the distinctive trait of an **arthavāda** statement is that it serves as an inducement to action rather than strictly as a command. In other words, if one does 'x' then 'y' will be gained, thus one should do 'x'. The distinctions between mantra, vidhi and arthavāda are variously interpreted in Mīmāṁsaka traditions.

17. Previously Bhāskararāya had taken amrtam bhajante as a vidhi, an injunction, and here he qualifies his view the statement is actually an arthavāda, a statement of inducement. Can a declarative statement, a mantra, be a vidhi? The earlier answer was yes. Now he asks can a mantra be an arthavāda and answers yes again. According to oral traditions there are two types of arthavāda, the first sort being an encouragement to act but is not necessarily a proven or accomplished fact while the second, the bhūtārthavāda, is an accomplished fact and is necessarily true. This second type is what is intended here.

Bhāskararāya has in mind statements concerning mantra repetition, japa, which he considers not merely arthavādas but bhūtārthavādas. The argument is that the knowledge that liberates, embodied in the mantra, is not new, that is, it is an accomplished fact (bhūta) and not something yet to come into being (bhavya). Oral tradition asserts that

knowledge merely removes adventitious obstacles, thus when *japa* is performed the mind becomes so pure that the obstacles are dispelled. It can be said then that through *japa* the aspirant attains *mokṣa* though technically it is not the *japa itself* that brings about the liberation, it merely removes the obstacles allowing the natural state of liberation to shine through.

18. By three kinds of contemplative worship Bhāskararāya means *upāsana* on the gross, subtle and transcendent aspects of the goddess. He asserts that each form of *upāsana* leads to the same result but goes on to say that it is the collective worship of all three that insures results. While the *upāsana* is usually hierarchy arranged according to the aspect worshipped, Bhāskararāya does not undervalue any of the three forms.

19. The last line of this unidentified verse makes little sense. It reads: **bhaktasya kṛtyāmetavādanyādabhyudāyam viduḥ.** Consulted manuscripts offer no better alternative. The translation follows from context and the suggestions of living adepts. What Bhāskararāya means is that individually these acts do not bring about results, rather it is only collectively that they confer benefits.

20. According to oral tradition the cake offerings called *puroḍāśa* are made of brown rice and are offered in vessels or skulls, or they made of ground-meal with clarified butter. The example is intended to show that the full *soma* sacrifice requires the use of these cake offerings while for the non-*soma* sacrificer these offerings are optional. Just prior to this Bhāskararāya argued that results are achieved collectively through all aspects of worship. Now he argues for a provision that suggests results can come from individual acts or from individual acts performed apart from the whole sacrifice in which they are prescribed.

21. This statement in the *Prātiśākhyas* is unidentified. What Bhāskararāya means here is that one could read either *tadīle* or *tadīde* in the Verse. This is yet another example of Bhāskararāya's treatment of the Upaniṣad as Vedic text exhibiting the peculiarities of Vedic grammar.

22. Emend **sañjātaḥ** to **ādeśa** following Adyar.

23. Emend **naduḥspṛṣṭhādeśa** to **tu nālādeśaḥ**.

24. Bhāskararāya has in mind the identification of the fifteen (or sixteen) *nityās* each representing a day on the lunar calender. There are at least two prominent opinions as to how this is to be performed. According to the first, during the *śuklapakṣa*, or bright half of the lunar month as

the moon wanes, the deities are placed counterclockwise beginning at the base of the *vasukoṇa* five to each side of the triangle. In this procedure one begins with Kāmeśvara and ends with Citra. But during the *kṛṣṇapakṣa*, or dark half of the lunar month as the moon waxes, the order of the *nityās* is reversed, that is, Citrā is first and Kāmeśvarā last. Also in the *kṛṣṇapakṣa* the *bījākṣaras* **aṃ, au, ai, e** and **o** precede the name of the *nityā*. This practice is common today among south Indian Śrīvidyā adepts. According to the *Nityotsava* of Umānandanātha, a work that one would suspect reflects Bhāskararāya's own views since it is authored by his most famous disciple, there is no mention of this reversal of identification. Rāmeśvara on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* is silent on the matter. In contemporary *paddhatis* the majority opinion is that no such reversal occurs but there are, as it were, no textual authorities to which one can refer to reflect on the practice historically.

25. *Jñānārṇava Tantra*, 16.36cd-39ab. Bhāskararāya's reading, however, differs from that of the Ānandasrama edition. The variants are:

	Bhāskararāya	Ānandāśrama
v.36cd	**agradakṣo-**	**pūrvadakṣo-**
v.37ab	**paścāt** **ha**	**tatra** **hi**
v.37cd	**anukarānta** **dakṣiṇāyāṃ**	**uvarṇānta** **dakṣiṇasyam**
v.38ab	**dīrghakaranādi**	**ukarādi**
v.39ab	**anusvārantaṃ madhye**	**anusvārantamantrastu**

Emend 36cd to **dakṣagrauttarakramāt**; emend 37cd to **uvarṇānta**; emend 38ab to **ukarādi**.

26. Emend **ityādīna tantre nirdiṣṭhaḥ** to **ityādīna tantrantare nirdiṣṭhitaḥ** following Adyar.

27. Unidentified verse.

28. *Taittirīya Brahmaṇa*, 3.10.1 following the citation in the Avalon edition.

29. Emend **tripurasundaro adityasvarūpā** to **tripurasundarītyādi nityāsvarūpā**.

30. Emend **prasangāt kāmaṃ** to **prasaṅgātkāmyam**.

[VERSE ELEVEN]

> [In Kāmakalā meditation] the two circles are the two breasts, the one reflection is the face and half [the letter "ha" is the female organ]. The three [limbs of the body] are the secret mansions [identified with the outermost three lines of the bhūgrha sub-cakra of the Śrīcakra].
>
> Meditating upon the desired, the aspect (kalā) [of Manmatha] [and] what has a desirable form, a man is born the Form of Desire [i.e., Śiva] desired [by women].

[The words in the Verse] the two circles [refer to] the two breasts. [What is called] the one reflection is the face below. The three mansions (sadanāni) [in the Verse] are [the three outer lines of] the bhūgraha [cakra, that is the outer gate way of the śrīcakra surrounding the configuration]. The secret [form identified with the female organ is represented by] the form of half the letter "ha" (hakārārdha).[1]

Even according to lexical meanings the [word] reflection (bimba) is non-feminine [in gender] and circle (maṇḍala) is [found] in [all] three genders. Thus even the word reflection can have the [grammatical] sense of circle. Following the description of the three circles (maṇḍalas) given in Verse Four, they are in this context identified with the two breasts as the fire circle (vahnimaṇḍala) and the sun circle (sūryamaṇḍala) because of the intention with which the word reflection is used here. According to the order of the rendering [in this text] the face alone is the reflection (bimba) identified with the moon [maṇḍala] and is

below the breasts. [This is the case] because of the intention with which [the word] half (ardhaḥ) is used [in the verse].

It is clearly inferred that [by saying] "half the letter 'na'" [the author means] the bhūpura [cakra, that is the outermost gateways of the śrīcakra] which is [considered in meditation to be] below the breasts. There are [however] various forms of Kāmakalā [meditation] given in a reverse order [of description] in various places in the Tantras. Similarly the Bhāgavatpāda [Śaṅkarācārya] has corroborated by following the order of meaning rather than the order of words by saying,

> One should meditate imagining the face as the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra] below which are the two breasts and below that half the letter "ha" [i.e., the female organ].[2]

The word reflection (bimba) refers to the bindu [and] that [reflection] refers to the collection of cakras beginning with the bindu [in the center of the śrīcakra] and ending with the manvaśra cakra [that is, the cakra of fourteen minor triangles].[3]

> The forms of the three circles have the nature of a wheel (cakra), power (śakti) and fire (anala).[4]

Thus in this [above quoted] verse of the Sundarihṛdaya the word circle (maṇḍali) is explained as referring to the [sub-] cakras [of the śrīcakra] beginning with the inner ten

[minor triangles] and the rest [proceeding outward].

In order to conceive the six maṇḍalas [of the sricakra] beginning with the bindu [and proceeding outward] as a single unit, the word "one" [is used in Verse Eleven].

[The compound in the Verse] "the two circles" (dvamaṇḍalau) are referring to the two [sub-] cakras of eight and sixteen [lotus] petals.

The mention of these three limbs [of the body] suggests all the limbs [of the body]. Actually even the [human] body has only three limbs, [namely,] (1.) from the head to the throat, (2.) from the throat to the breasts and (3.) from the heart to the anus.5 The hair, hands and feet are each their own respective branches.

Thus the [word] kāmīm [in the Verse] refers to one who has transformed himself into the nature of all the [sub-] cakras [of the śrīcakra]. Kalā [in the Verse refers to that aspect of the evolution of the thirty-six tattvas which make up the world as] the aspect (kalā) of consciousness associated with Manmatha [i.e., Śiva] who has the nature of Kāmeśvara, the Lord of Desire. [The words in the Verse] kāmyarūpam [literally, a desirable form]. Knowing [in the Verse] means meditating upon. In another branch [of the Vedic schools] the reading is cikitvā [literally, knowing, for viditva as it is here].6 [The word] man (nara) means the upāsaka [that is, the meditative worshipper]. Kāmarūpa

[the Form of Desire] refers [in the Verse] to Manmatha [i.e., Śiva] who causes an immediate [mental] disturbance (kṣobhakāra) in all women by virtue of his beauty. Only very little [about the concept of kāmakalā meditation] is said here. [The word] desirable (kāmya) [in the Verse] means hearing of his special attributes [one becomes like him, desirable] and a form attractive to all the people living in the three worlds. It has been said by Bhāgavatpāda [Śaṅkarācārya]:

> Whoso meditates, O Consort of Hara, on your kalā [i.e., seed syllable] of Manmatha suddenly leads women to confusion, how much less is [the woman called] the Three Worlds (trilokīm) confused, [She] who has the sun and the moon as her breasts.[7]

Thus one who wishes to obtain a desirable form should meditate on the kāmakalā according to the prescription which connects the fruit with the attributes [of meditation].[8] But in this regard the intention of the Bhāgavatpāda is that the fruit of the meditation prescribed having a particular result is achieved even apart from (bahir) the external sacrifice (bahiryāga); [this is the case because the result] is not connected as an [inseparable] part of the external sacrifice as the syena sacrifice (syenakavādeḥ) is as a part of the Soma [sacrifice], so by its nature (svataḥ) it does not depend upon the form of any other ritual (kriyā). In the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava [it says],

> Conceiving the bindu as the face and the two breasts are established as below that.

One should consider the female organ (adhomukham) together with half the letter "ha" as below those [two breasts].[9]

If you say that this meditation is thought of in the sense of a sacrifice because it is enjoined in the section on sacrifice [in the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava], what harm is there in that? Since there is no objection even for external practice [of this form of meditation] for those whose aim are its fruits.[10] Hence it is said in the Bhaktisūtra beginning with a recollection of the Blessed One [Kṛṣṇa], "Everything is, as it were, covered both inside and outside."[11]

The Twelfth Verse is said in order to enjoin the substances used in external sacrifice and the method of employing [these] substances in the external sacrifice.

[VERSE TWELVE]

> Wine, fish and before [fish] meat; grains and wombs [indicating sexual intercourse] should be well-performed [in the ritual worship].
> Offering food to the Great Goddess, the adept performer should take it for himself [and so] accomplish [the aim of the sacrifice].

[The word] jhasa [in the Verse] means fish (matsya), palam means meat (māṁsam).

[The Verse says] before the fish [is offered and consumed] there is wine. The meaning is that after the first [makāra, wine] is the second [i.e., fish].

Accordingly meat becomes the third [makāra].

[The word] bhaktāni, enjoining the various types of food made from grains such as pulse-cakes, chick peas, etc., is the fourth [makāra].[12] Yoni [literally, womb] indicates the female organ and that suggests the fifth [makāra, namely maithuna or sexual intercourse].[13] The usage of yoni in the plural expresses the difference in castes (jāti) such as brahmana, kṣatriya and others. Supporting that interpretation are phrases like, "beginning with the eight types of groups (kula)" as is observed in the Tantras.[14] [The word] 'and' [in the Verse] indicates the combination of these five [makāras]. Even though [the word] meat is read after the word fish [in the Verse] it should be place before fish as is indicated by the [use of the] word adya, before. What is intended is that a [specific] order is to be followed for the makāras [in the ritual].

Therefore if the primary [substance of the makāra] is not available a substitute (pratinidhi) may be used according to the dictum, "In the even that [all] the five makāras are not available the daily worship should be performed." Even though this is established in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra what has been suggested is that when the preceding element is unavailable the succeeding ones, even if they are primary [and not substitutions], should not be used.[15]

Despite the unavailability of even the first [primary

substance of the *makāras*] according to the practice of the tradition (*sampradāyālabhyam*) one should use the fourth [*makāra*, that is, fermented grains (*mudrā*)] since this is considered essential for the sake of food offerings (*naivedyam*) [at the time of worship (*pūjā*)].

But if one accepts the reading "*ajyam*" [in the Verse instead of *adyam* as it is advised] according to other schools [of interpretation] then the meaning is only °clarified butter' (*ghṛtam*) [and not °before' as suggested here].[16] Then [if *ajam*] is taken to mean "cooked" then by the dictum of the crow's eye it is an epithet of both [fish and meat].[17] Furthermore it is not logical to explain [*ajam*] as [something] connected with goats (*aja*) [like goat's flesh]. A different meaning [for *ajam*] is seen in the Tantras and the enumeration of the five *makāras* as stated in the Verse is contradicted [if one reads *ajam* instead of *adyam*].[18]

The [use of wine] is enough to please (*tarpana*) the Supreme Deity, [and] the sacrifice (*yāga*) should be done with a substitute [for the first *makāra*]. In the external sacrifice by taking for oneself [the *makāras* and hence making the sacrifice complete] even in the absence of that [taking for oneself] there is nothing objectionable, as it is inferred by the sixth dictum.[19]

[The term] *supariskṛtāni* [literally, well-performed] means fulfilled [or perfected, *samskṛtāni*] by rites

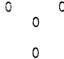
(samskāra) visible and invisible. And these [visible and invisible rites] are mundane (laukika) when they take the form of cooking, etc., and Vedic [or extraordinary, vaidika] when they take the form of removing curses, etc. This is well established in many Tantras, or by the dictum stated in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra, "Many or few [prescriptions] have been stated in one's own ritual text (gṛhyasūtra)."[20]

[The words in the Verse] mahatyai devatayai mean 'to the Great Goddess'; 'offering food' (nivedyan) means sacrificing (yajan): 'the adept performer' (sukṛti) means the performer of the external sacrifice (bahiryāgakartā). 'Taking for oneself' (svātmikṛtya) means consuming them [that is, the offerings] oneself; 'accomplished' (siddhim) means one obtains the results of sacrifice (yāgaphalam).

By the sacrifice employing the five m's [mapancaka] beginning with the first and adding each successively, one should achieve the desired result of [identity with] the deity who is the Great Goddess.[21] Thus it should be noted that the method by which this [Verse] has become an injunction (vidhi) [to use the five makāras rather than a mere statement concerning them] is comparable to the injunction to perform internal worship (antaryāga).

The Thirteenth Verse is said in order to instruct meditation on the deity [conceived of as] having qualities as an accessory to the sacrifice (kṛyāngam).

1. Bhāskararāya's description reverses the order in the Verse, that is, the two breasts are placed above, below which is the face. The term hakārārdha, literally half the letter **ha**', indicates the female organ. The picture Bhāskararāya has in mind is as follows:



This generates a triangle with a central bindu representing the trikona and bindu and also a representation of the female organ meditated upon in the kāmakalādhyāna.

2. Saundaryalaharī, 19abc.

3. Emend **sat** to **tad**.

4. Sundarihrdaya is the Yoginīhrdaya, 2.54cd. Bhāskararāya reads **mandalātrayarūpantu** for **mandalatrayayuktam**, the latter reading appearing in the Kaviraj's third edition (p.154).

5. Emend **śīrśādighantikantah** to **śīrśādikanthāntah** following Adyar and GOML.

6. Here Upanisadbrahmayogin reads cikitvā and glosses it as dhyatvā, °thought' or °reflection'. Bhāskararāya chooses the viditvā reading and gives it the same interpretation.

7. Saundaryalaharī, 19cdefgh, omitting the first word of cd, harārdham.

8. Emend **kāmarūptvakāmyatvakāmah** to **kāmarūpatvakāmah** following Adyar.

9. Nityāsodaśikārnava, 1.201. Note that the configuration of the bījāksara klīm in the devanagari script is suggested as an esoteric form of the kāmakalā. Thus,

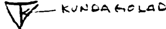
On saparārdha identified with the female organ as half the letter ha see Vāmakeśvarīmata with the commentary of Rajanaka Jayaratha, edited by M.K. Sastri, Srinagar, India, 1945. Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, Vol.64, p.75.

10. Omit **annadyakāmanaphalakavesthevīva** following GOML 2 and oral traditions.

11. This phrase occurs in neither the Śandilya or Nārada Bhaktisūtras.

12. Emend to place the **danda** after **caturtham** following Adyar.

13. The term **kundagolodbhava** is cryptic but according to oral traditions it refers to a portion of the female organ. The lexical meaning usually given is an illegitimate child while here the meaning is as a synonym for the female organ, the yoni.



14. The phrase is unidentified.

15. Paraśurāmakalpasūtra, 1.24. Emend the text to read **nitykrama** for **nityakramam** and **pratyāvamrṣthiḥ** for **pratyavamamrṣthiḥ** following GOML 2 and the Davé edition of the Paraśurāmakalpasūtra (see bibliography for details).

16. Exactly to whom Bhāskararāya is referring is unclear. This is not the reading of either Upaniṣadbrahmayogin or Rāmānanda, nor has the possibility appeared in consulted manuscripts of the Upaniṣad.

17. This dictum is based on the supposition that a crow has only one eye that can move as the occasion permits from one socket to the other, suggesting that a word or a phrase used only once in a sentence can serve two purposes.

18. Emend **sutroktānām** to **suktoktānām**. This makes better sense since the reading of **ajam** would confuse the meaning of the verse. It is possible to retain the reading **sutroktānām** and take it as referring to the Paraśurāmakalpasūtra verse cited above but this particular sūtra does not actually enumerate the pañcamakāras.

19. What Bhāskararāya means by the 'sixth dictum', ṣaṣṭhanyāya is unknown.

20. cf., Paraśurāmakalpasutra, 1.31, the full quotation of the text reads: **bahvalpam ya svagṛhyoktam yasya yāvat prakīrtītam/ tasya tavati śāstrārthe kṛte sarvaḥ kṛto' bhavet//**

The idea Bhāskararāya means to convey is that the rituals, their number and methods of performance differ according to which gṛhyasūtra is followed and this differs from family to family.

21. Emend **mahādevīdevatākeneṣthasiddhim** to **mahādevīdevatā iṣthasiddhim**. No available manuscripts offer a better reading.

[VERSE THIRTEEN]

> [She is] white and the Mother of the Universe. The desirous are bound by the noose [of their own desires].
>
> [She] strikes down with a bow and five arrows [desire]. [She is] red, the Primordial Power and [has a] Universal View [of all beings' karma].

[The words] "sṛṇyeva sitayā" [in the Verse] are in the third case [the word sṛṇi occurring as sṛṇyā, according to the Pāṇinian sūtra, 2.3.21] any characteristic indicating a state (or condition) is put in the instrumental case to express this relation.'[1] [The word] sitayā means white (svetayā), that is, consisting of silver: or because there is no difference between sa and śa [as in sitayā, then śitayā] can mean sharp (nisitaya), that is, a sharp instrument. Sṛṇyā means [the Goddess] is characterized, as it were, by having an elephant goad [in one of Her hands].[2] Viśvajanya [is to be analyzed as an exocentric (bahuvrīhi) compound meaning] She is the Mother of the Universe because She is the One from whom everything is born.[3] Aruṇā [in the Verse] means possessing a red color (lauhityavat). [The words] Primordial Śakti (ādiśakti) mean [the Goddess] Mahātripurasundarī [who has a] universal view (viśvacarśanī) over the good and evil actions (karma) of all living beings.[4]

[The word] 'desirous' (abhīkān) means lustful persons, namely, low people who undertake [this] path due to their desirous or passionate nature [which is] binding

(pratibandhah) [them]. [She, with] 'a bow' (dhanusa) 'with five arrows' (pañcabhīrisubhīr) pierces [the desires, that is, causes them to fall (vidhyati)].5

Those who without desires, having a sharp intellect (vaidhadhīya) undertake [this path] are uplifted, and because this matter is clear it is not repeated here. It is said:

> One should serve [Her] only with the known injunctions. If one [serves] with desire She causes them to fall. Those substances by which one falls are the very same ones through which one gains liberation. For the lustful and those without lust these paths are established.6

Yāska [the Vedic grammarian] says [the word] "sṛṇi" has a twofold meaning [indicating] both protector and slayer.7

Construing the word "as it were" (iva) with all the words of the text, She appears [dualistically] out of compassion for Her devotees only imaginatively as having qualities, while what is suggested is that ultimately Her form is qualitiless.

The Fourteenth Verse is said in order to instruct the equality of male and female forms as conceptualized with qualities.

[VERSE FOURTEEN]

> The Prosperous (bhāga) [Lord] is the Blessed Śakti who is both Desire and the Lord [that is, Śiva]. [Śiva and Śakti are] the two givers in this [contemplative worship] of prosperity.
>
> [These] two are the same substance, have the same nature, are completely identical and of equal power. [She is] without decay [and] the Womb of the Universe, [the Creator].

[The word] bhāga [in the Verse] is a synonym for Lord (īśa). [So it is said in the Viṣṇupurāṇa:]

> There are six considered [attributes of] Bhāga [the Lord]: empowerment (aiśvarya), Dharma, fame, prosperity, knowledge (jñāna) and discrimination (vijñāna).[8]

In such scriptures (smṛti) the various qualities that make up the body of the Lord are all designated here by the word bhāga.[9] Śakti [the Goddess] is said to be that very collection of qualities (dharmasamuha). This is the very form (svarūpa) of the deity in feminine form described for the sake of contemplative worship (upāsyatvena). It has been said in the Nagānandasūtra that Brahman [the Absolute] whose nature is luminosity (prakāśātmanaḥ) takes Reflection (vimarśa) as its intrinsic nature: in the Āgamas [Reflection] is described as the nature of consciousness within conscious beings, born out of its own essence; [it is] Supreme Speech (para vāk), independent (svatantryam), the Supreme Self, [and] empowers (aiśvarya); [it has] reality (satattvam), being (satta), effulgence (sphuratta), essence (sārā); [She is] the Little Mother Mālinī, is in the image of the heart, self-consciousness (svasamvit) and active (spanda). The explanation of these special qualities is to be seen only in the commentary [on the Nagānandasūtras].[10]

'The Blessed One' (bhagavan) [in the Verse] means the

one qualified by that collection of qualities [listed above].[11] 'Desire' (kāma) and 'Lord' (Īśa) refer to Kamesvara [the Lord of Desire] who alone is the masculine form of the deity that is worshipped (upāsyadevatā). [The word] here' (iha) means in this contemplative worship (upāsanayam) of prosperity (saubhāganam) which is of the forms of Dharma, wealth and desire [the human objectives and] yields various fruits. Even though there are two givers (datarau) [stated in the Verse] the deity is only one; though it is twofold [in masculine and feminine aspects] when meditated upon as having qualities, [this is for the sake of] accomplishing the three aims [of human existence, Dharma, wealth and desire]. This is the meaning [of the Verse].

'Sampradhānau' [and] 'samasattvau' meaning °the two are of equal importance' [have the same meaning]. The word sattva means a quality and by that is meant the [two] exist in the relationship of quality and qualified. What is intended is that in the meditation (dhyāna) the fact that Kāmeśvarī (Śakti) is seated on the lap of Kāmeśvara (Siva) indicates that Śiva is the base (ādhāra), [He] is the quality (guṇa) and Śakti is the substance (pradhānam). But in the meditation in which Ambikā is joined with Śiva as half [His body] because of the special form [sharing] head, hands, feet and other limbs, Śakti is the quality (**guṇa**) and Śiva is the substance (pradhānam).[12] Thus though they are

equal in granting [their devotees] what is desired [and] are related to one another as quality and substance, [Śiva] is His aspect [aṃsaḥ] as Creator of the Universe is dependent upon Śakti.[13] 'The sameness of the two' (samotayor) is said [in the Verse] to suggest that meditating on only the feminine aspect one achieves the result. [Samotayor is grammatically explained as meaning] of the two completely (samyak) undivided mutually a joining of the two (tayor) as half Śiva and half Śakti is the form of Ardhanarīśvara. 'Equal power' (samaśakti) means the All-Powerful Goddess who is a collection of all (nikhila) qualities, [She alone] is the Womb of the Universe (viśvayoni), Maker of the Universe. To illustrate this the Śaktisūtra says,

> The Conscious One (citiḥ) is independently the cause for the establishment of the universe.[14]

It is established in verses such as, "Desiring to protect us from all (sāmāsmād) who would harm us", that the word sāme is a synonym for all (sarva).[15] "Without decay" (ajarā) is an adjective [applied to the Goddess] in Her aspect as the Womb of the Universe (viśvayoni) [that is, as its Creator]. The meaning is that as the Maker of the Universe (jagatkartṛ) She is the Natural Order (ṛta) because She is known by valid means of cognition such as perception, etc., about which there can be no doubt. So it has been said in the Devībhāgavata,

> Śakti creates the Universal Egg (brahmāṇḍa), She protects, verily, everything. By Her own desire She collects this universe of moving and

> unmoving [things]. Not Viṣṇu nor Śiva, nor Indra, Brahma or Agni, not Sūrya nor Varuṇā are capable in their own right of anything [without Her]. Those gods perform their own work having been united with Her. That [She is] the cause for all actions is understood by sense perception (*pratyakṣa*) [a valid means of cognition].[16]

Also elsewhere [in the *Devībhāgavata* it is said]:

> Even Śiva becomes a corpse when separated from Kuṇḍalinī. The wise know that one bereft of Śakti is capable of nothing.[17]

Details are to be seen in the *Setubandha* [my commentary on the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*].[18] Therefore even though Śiva can confer fruits, because He is depending upon Śakti, it is a bit delayed; but in respect to Śakti [since She is] not depending on anyone there is no delay.[19] Those who desire to achieve results quickly should meditate on the deity only in the feminine form.

Thus having stated the twofold meditation on [the deities when considered] with qualities, because there has been no mention of the aspect to be meditated upon as qualitiless, the fifteenth verse is said to instruct that [qualitiless meditation] and the means by which that [meditation is accomplished].[20]

[VERSE FIFTEEN]

> Purified [by rituals and mantras], by offerings (*havīśa*), by drinking, by the mind's [efforts], indeed [all] the limitations [on Self Realization] are dissolved.
>
> [The Self of] All is [called] the Creator of all the World, Maintainer [and] Destroyer, the Form of the Universe.

Those who have written the texts have stated that the various methods [described] in the active path (karmamārga), the knowledge path (jñānamārga) and the path of devotion (bhaktimārga) are mutually contradictory. It is clear to those who know the texts that all those [methods described], because they are difficult to practice, yield results only over a long period. And hence the only method [that is truly effective proceeds through] a series of stages (ullāsa) adopted through repeated practice and the taking of ritual offerings for oneself [that is, ingesting them]. In this respect the rules formulated should be [followed] up to the mature-stage (prauḍhollāsa), after which it is as you please; in the last stage you obtain Brahman's own form (brahmasvarūpata).[21] And this is further illustrated in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra:

> Among the [seven] stages, namely, the initial, incipient, youthful, mature, the end of the mature, the detached and stateless stages, the rules of conduct are to be followed only up to the mature stage and afterwards as you please.[22]

Descriptions of the sevenfold stages are to be seen in the Kulārṇava and other [Tantras].[23]

Even though everyday the very form of Brahman is obtained in deep sleep, because of the dissolution of the mind [such that one has no cognition of oneself] and likewise because there is a connection with sleep as a special form of the development of ignorance, that [Brahman experience] is not [regarded ordinarily] as a human aim.[24]

That state bereft of sleep in the usual sense is a human aim as the level of knowledge the wise consider the seventh [stage]. The Yogis experience that [seventh stage] known as equipoise devoid of concepts (nirvikalpasamādhitvena); and that state is experienced by the Yogis as the stage beyond the detached [stage] and as having the form of the stateless (anavasthā) [stage].[25] It has been said:

> The form of Brahman is bliss and that is established in the body. The [ritual] substances which manifest that [bliss] are drunk by the Yogis.[26]

But in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra the manifestor of this [bliss] is said to be the five makāras.[27] However if the substances not being ritually used [and so considered] impure (apavitram) are drunk then because they actively obstruct the aims of human life, they bind one to sin [and] are not capable of inducing that state [of bliss]. In the Samayācārasmṛti it has been said:

> (A) The impure drink of ordinary persons produces quarrellsomeness, anxiety and sin. That which is without ritual mantras is only ordinary drink.
>
> (B) Having drunk according to the prescriptions of ordinary drink even the hero goes to hell. Purified (saṃskṛta) [drink] is enlightening, expiating and makes pure (suddhikṛt).
>
> (C) By this [purification] there is destroyed [what is ordinarily] great degeneration and revelation (sphuraṇām) of mantras [occurs]. From purified drink [one obtains] long life, auspiciousness (śrīḥ), distinction (kānti), prosperity (saubhāgyam), knowledge (jñāna), the eight types of empowerment and the ability to fly. A Brahmana should drink liquor in the sautramani [sacrifice which is part of the Vedic soma

sacrifice] and at the time of ritual worship (kulācāra).

(D) Otherwise having drunk out of desire one ought to perform an expiation (prayāścittam).[28]

But,

Better that the vital breaths go [that is, one dies] but a Brahmana should not offer liquor [in ritual].

A Brahmana who offers liquor becomes stripped of his Brahmanhood.[29]

Because of restrictions such as these stated in the Śaktisaṃgama Tantra and the Tantrarāja Tantra, the means by which one overcomes the entanglements in Dharma are to be understood only from tradition.[30] And the methods of establishing [the means to overcome the entanglements in Dharma that arise due to these contradictory statements in the scriptures] have been explained by me in the commentary on the Kaulopaniṣad.[31] Therefore those qualified persons who have attained the [higher] stages [realize] the individual self (jīvātman) is different than the inner mental process (antaḥakaraṇa); when the obstacles of the inner mental process are removed and the experience of Brahman [is obtained], what else remains [for one to achieve]?

And one should not say that their aim was not obtained because of the temporariness of the stage [reached by use of] substances [such as wine]. This also applies to meditative concentration (samādhi). In this regard [it should be noted that] by methods such as controlling the

breath one enters into meditative concentration (samādhi) again and again by the proficiency gained over a period of time; after some time even without breath control one obtains permanent meditative concentration. So its said that those who board a boat on the ocean feel a swaying back and forth due to [motion of] the waves and when they alight from the boat the feeling a swaying continues; likewise in the present contexts, by the proficiency established [through the attainment of the] detached (unmāni) and stateless (anavasthā) [stages] by drinking purified substances [such as ritually consecrated wine], even without the substances, after a few days a similar state not [liquor] induced is accomplished.

The meaning of the words [in the Verse is as follows]: Purified (pavitena) by rituals and mantras, by what is left over after the worship of the Goddess (havīśa), by drinking (pariśruta), [by what is] born out of the internal mental process (manastaḥ), the limitation (samkoce) of [attaining Self-realization] being dissolved by inactivity, one [attains] the stateless [stage] following the stage of detachment. This is to paraphrase [the Verse]. [The particle] vai [means] certainly, [thus] one becomes the Self of all (sarva). This is to summarize [the meaning].

Therefore the meaning of the verbal root √ mad [°to be intoxicated'] in statements taken as injunctions for internal sacrifice [indicates inducing the bliss] of

conceptionlessness in which the only object is one's Self. It is only with this intention that the various types of intoxication are explained in the Tantras,

> Those intoxicated, having drunk, become passionate; those passionate become angry.
> Singers sing having drunk, Yogins who have drunk meditate.[32]

What is intended is that a special [type of] Yogi achieves that [meditative state] with this help.

The nature of the Self of all is explained [to mean that] Brahma is [as the Verse calls Him] the Creator of all the World (sarvasya jagato vidhāta); the Maintainer (dhārta) means Viṣṇu, the Destroyer (hārta) means Rudra (i.e., Śiva). Why should one unnecessarily elaborate? A slave, a fisherman, a cheat, every living being is that [Self of all in] "the form of the universe" [as the Verse says]. So let the body fall by its accumulated [karma] anytime, anywhere, there is nothing special about it, because what is to be accomplished has already been accomplished: this is the intention. It has been said in the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra,

> Knowing in this way, one who has performed according to injunctions [the rituals and is] established in the [Tantric] practice, being one who has done what is to be done in all respects, if he leaves the body in the house of a butcher or in Kasi [the holy city] there is no difference: He is liberated while yet living.[33]

Now the sixteenth and final verse concluding what has been described as the doctrine regarding [the Goddess]

Tripura is said in order to instruct the fruit that arises from studying it.

[VERSE SIXTEEN]

> This is the great Upaniṣad [in the form of statements expounding the secret meaning] of [the goddess] Tripura. The Supreme Indestructible [Brahma] praises that [Upaniṣad] which is the Supreme Knowledge this Rg [Veda source] and the Yajur, Sāma, Atharva [Vedas] and other [sources contain]. AUM !

This [Upaniṣad] has been elaborated by the author of the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra, the Lord Sri Paraśurāma,

> "One who studies this Great Upaniṣad since it is the entire essence of the doctrine of the Great Traipura [the Goddess] becomes the sacrificer of all sacrifices. Whatever sacrifice is studied is obtained as desired with the sacrifice of this [Upaniṣad]." So it is revealed [concluding with the words] "Upaniṣad" [and] "auspiciousness".[34]

By this [quotation it should be understood that] whatever has not been stated or is lacking in this Upaniṣad, the meanings are to be taken from the [Paraśurāma-] Kalpasūtra. It is established in the sections of the [Parasurāma-] Kalpasūtra [designed] for those incapable of collecting the parts [of the teaching] scattered according to the different [Vedic] schools, to assert the authority of this treatise on practical matters.

The meanings of the words [in the Verse is as follows]: This (iyam), that is, the Great Upaniṣad "in the form of statements expounding the secret meaning" of Tripurā is to

be supplied [to make sense of the Verse]. The reason for this is stated [in the words] beginning with "that which" (yam) [in the Verse]. 'The Supreme Indestructible' (paramākṣaram) means Brahma, the Agent; 'that which' (yam) means the Upaniṣad; 'with praising [words]' (girbhiḥ) 'he praises' (itte). Iḍa is used in the sense of "praising" (stutau); [in determining the grammatical form] parame, supreme, [as being in the locative singular case] -se is the substitute for -su in the [case of the grammar of the] Vedas.[35] By interchanging [the grammatical declension of] the second case-ending [that is, the accusative form] yam with the first case-ending [nominative] Brahma [the Verse can be interpreted to mean] either praising the author of the Upanisad or as the author praising Brahman. The meaning is that either the praising is done by Parameśvara or it is He who is being praised, or it is that knowledge praises Tripurā [the Goddess]. Or [the word parame] can be divided as 'param' [and] 'e' which means the syllable [or the indestructible (akṣara)] has the form of the letter 'e'. So it is said:

> It is seen even today that the letter 'e' is the seed and the basis for the emergence of the three triangles from the Universal Egg to the mound of earth.[36]

Even the letter 'e' can be divided into 'a' plus 'i' because it is said in the scriptures that "the letter 'a' is verily the entire speech", "if one hears 'i', one hears it

without 'ka' and 'la'." Or [it may be interpreted that] the supreme Aum [is construed] as the letter 'a' in a special manner.[37] The meaning is that [Aum] being the combination of 'a','u' and 'm' as supreme and undivided praises.[38] It is recalled in the Śivarahasya, "The word Aum contains what is compounded or individual, O Giver of Protection."[39]

"One should study one's own chapters [of the Vedas]" [and because of that injunction] one reads their own [prescribed] chapters [and what is obtained] is that one gains [liberation] from this [Upanisad].[40] [This is what is suggested by the word] 'this' (eṣa) [in the Verse]. According to the reading of the Atharva school and others, the words 'Ṛg', etc., mean the Vedas and not individual mantras. The words eṣa, etad, and ayam [all literally meaning 'this'] refer to the Ṛg, Yajur and Atharva [Vedas] in a special way. The Sāma [Veda] by virtue of its being sung and not being, as it were, syllables [is suggested by] the word iti [used here to mean 'thus'] suggesting that its results (phalam) are equal to those [other Vedas occurring] in syllables.

Among the eighteen vidyās [that is, traditional sciences] only four are mentioned here, by the word 'other' (anya) the [remaining] fourteen are indicated. The meaning is that this Upanisad has for its very form (svarūpa) everything.

The very form (svarūpa) of the praṇava also [is

intended] so [the text says] Aum. [By the Paninian rule], "omanośca" it is the form of the subsequent letter [which is retained thus the Verse reads vidyā om rather than combining, according to sandhi rules, to vidyaum].[41] Therefore the [esoteric] sense is that [this Upanisad] should be studied even by mendicants [since it contains Oṃ, the mantra specially prescribed for them].

This Upaniṣad is of this nature [namely of the fourteen vidyās, Oṃ, the four Vedas, etc.,] the greatness of which even the scriptures are not capable of describing. This [Upaniṣad] because it is of the form of Brahman in which words cannot begin [to describe its greatness] so the scriptures with this intention [in mind] prefer to remain silent. [The words] ityupaniṣad means [the Upaniṣad] concludes. The intention is that more than this secret cannot be revealed.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Thus the meaning of this Great Upaniṣad of Tripurā even though it cannot be revealed [truly in the written word] has been partially stated by Śrī Bhāskararāya, a Knower of the Agni [Sacrifices of the Vedas] for the sake of the learned.

Thus the Commentary on the Tripurāmahopaniṣad by Bhāskararāya is complete. [Let there be] Prosperity !

1. cf., The Astadhyāyī of Pāṇini, edited and translated by S.C. Vasu. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint edition 1980, Vol.I, p.286.

2. Emend **sṛṇyam'kuśenevopalakṣita** to **sṛṇyankuśenevopalakṣita** following Adyar.

3. Emend **viśvajagajjanani** to **jagajjanani** following Adyar and GOML.

4. Taking the word **mātra**, only or merely, in **praṇimātrasya** to mean **sarva**, all.

5. cf., Lalitāsahasranāma, n.10 and n.11 with the Saubhāgyabhāskara.
Read vidhyati as derived from the sixth class root √vidh, in the sense of °to pierce'. Either the form is made to appear deliberately archaic (as are many terms in the Upanisad) or it should be emended to vidhati to conform to the sixth class. Upaniṣadbrahmayogin reads viddhati.

6. Only the last portion of the first line of the quoted verses beginning with **tṛṣṇaya cetsa patāki** has been identified. It is Kulārṇava Tantra, 10.6.

7. This has not been found in Yāska.

8. Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6.75.74 with the following emendations: Read **vīryasya** for **dharmasya**; **jnānavairāgyoscaiva** for **jñānavijnāyoścaiva**. cf., **Srīvīsṇupurāṇam**, edited by Sampatkumaracarya. Kanchipuram, India: Granthamalakaryalaya, 1971.

9. Emend **śarīraghatako** to **śarīraghatakayova** following Adyar.

10. The Nagānandasūtras are unidentified.
Emend **hṛdayāmūrmiḥ** to **hṛdayāmūrtiḥ** following Adyar.

11. Emend **tadṛśadharmaviśiṣtha** to **tadṛśadharmasamuhaviśiṣtha** following Adyar.

12. The explanation seems a bit confused and variant readings offer no immediate solution. In the previous sentence Siva is the basis (ādhāra) and it would follow that He is the substance (pradhānam), that is, the qualified (guṇi) rather than the quality (guṇa). When Śakti is half His body, the idea being the figure of Ardhanarīśvara, She should be the substance (pradhānam).

13. cf., Saundaryalaharī, 1.

14. The Śaktisūtras have been unavailable for review.

15. The meaning of the verse quoted is not clear but it is likely to be found in either the Ṛg or Atharva Vedas, cf., Ṛg Veda, 6.44.7 where the word urūṣya occurs. The intended meaning of sāma, however, is perfectly clear.

16. Emend **Bhāgavata** to **Devībhāgavata** following Adyar and GOML. The passage has not been located.

17. This has not been located in the Devībhāgavatam.

18. cf., Setubandha on the Yoginīhṛdaya, 1.10-11 where Bhāskararāya quotes a passage reading, **śaktya śive sūkṣmenamadhama na vidyate iti pūrvamuktatvāt.**
Emend **viseṣah** to **vistaraḥ** following Adyar and GOML.

19. Emend **śaktyādhinatvādhilambitaṃ** to **śaktyādinavādisadvialmitam** following Adyar; also emend **sighraprasiddikāmaiḥ** to **sighrasiddhikāmaiḥ** following Adyar and GOML.

20. Emend **saguṇadhyānamuktva** to **saguṇadhyānadvayamuktva** following GOML 2.

21. On the stages in the liberative process see Part One.

22. PKS, 10.68.

23. cf., Kulārṇava Tantra, 1ff.

24. Emend to add **suśuptdāsāyām** after **pratidīnam**; also emend **sa** to **saḥ.**

25. Emend **nirvikalpasambandhitvena** to **nirvikalpasamādhitvena.**

26. Kulārṇava Tantra, 5.80.

27. PKS, 1.12.

28. The Samayācārasmṛti is unidentified. See the note above for details.
The sautramani is part of the soma sacrifice, see Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925, pp.352-359.
Portions of this quotation occur in Kulārṇava Tantra; (B) is Kulārṇava Tantra, 5.93 and cd of (C) is 6.31.
Emend **brāhmanaḥ** to **kāmataḥ** following GOML.

29. Unidentified verse, according to oral traditions it belongs to the Hamsamahesvara Tantra though no manuscript confirms this fact.
Emend **param** to **varam**; also **pragacchantu** to **prayacchantu** following GOML.

30. cf., Tantrarāja Tantra, 1.82-83. Note that the verse quoted above does not occur in either editions of Tantraraja Tantra or in the Śaktisamgama Tantra.

31. cf., Bhāskararāya's commentary following the line adharmakāranam in Kaulopanisad. He also refers here to the unidentified Nagānandasutraś. See p.2 of the Avalon edition for details.
Emend **brahmābhave sati kimavaśisyate** to **brahmābhave kimavaśisyate** following GOML.

32. Unidentified verse.
In ab of the verse emend **mattah kupyati kopanah** to **mattah kupyanti kopanah**; also in cd emend **kopinah** to **yoginah** following Adyar and GOML.

33. PKS, 10.82.

34. PKS, 10.83.

35. See Panini, 1.1.13 and also 7.1.39 for the true ending "e" as directed by the indicatory letter (anubandha) s.

36. Nityāsodaśikārnava, 1.6. Bhāskararāya says here that the devanagāri letter e can be made to look like a triangle, thus:

Furthermore, by the three triangles he means the three major inner triangles that combine to form the trikona and vasukona sub-cakras.

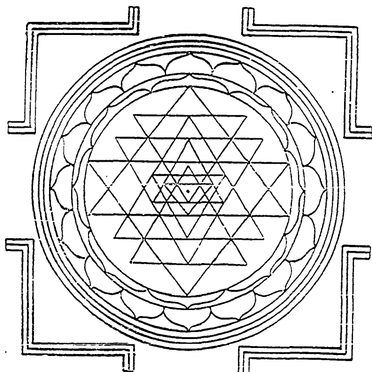
37. cf., Rg Veda, 10.71.6; also **akaro vai sarva vak** occurs as Aitareya Aranyaka, 2.3.6. Sivānanda in his Ṛjuvimarśinī on Nityāsodaśikārnava, 1.26 and again at 1.100 quotes this Vedic passage. The idea is that by hearing ī one actually hears the bījāksara klīm without the k and l sounds. Bhāskararāya in the Setubandha on Nityāsodaśikārnava, 1.6 says **a** is Paramaśiva and i is Paraśakti and by their combination **e** is produced and that the combination is represented by the central three major triangles of the śrīcakra.

38. Emend **carama** to **parama** following Adyar.

39. The Śivarahasya is unidentified.

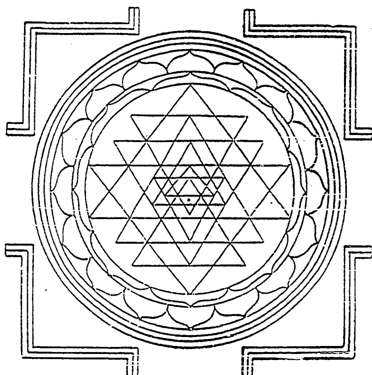
Appendix Two
Diagrams

The Śrīcakra According to Popular/Kaula Tradition



Appendix Two
Diagrams

The Śrīcakra According to the Samayācāra of Lakṣmīdhara



Appendix Three
Glossary

ācāra: "Practice", "conduct", "behavior", "custom", "teaching"; like other terms with a similar meaning, when **ācāra** is used in compound its preceding qualifier(s) indicates its specific sense.

advaita: lit., "non-dual", used to indicate the position of ultimate monism adopted by various schools of Indian thought. The two non-dualist schools of particular concern in the present study are the so-call pure non-dualists (**kevalādvaita**) led by the eighth-century Śaṅkarācārya and the Śākta Tantrics whose systems might best be termed non-dualistic theism. The two schools differ on many technical points but foremost is the contention of the Śāktas that the dualistic material world as perceived is not merely a product of ignorance (**avidyā**) but rather a product of the free will of God and that divinity is not a subordinate form (i.e., one "with qualities", the so-called saguṇa form) of the Absolute Brahman. Rather, the Śāktas adopt a position of original unity which transforms itself by its own free will into a real, dualistic universe of names and forms (**nāmarūpa**). Thus Śāktas adopt the position known as **pariṇāmavāda** or the doctrine of transformation which the **kevalādvaitins** reject.

ānanda: lit.,"bliss"; An attribute of the Absolute Brahman that is given prominence in Śākta Tantrism as a description of realization. In its ultimate form it is said to be an "unqualified bliss" differing from any mundane, conventional experience or description because it is (1) permanent and (2) lacks a recognition by the subject as a particular form of experience limited by sense awareness or mental impressions. **Ānanda** does, however, occur in various levels which are viewed hierarchically (that is, in the experiences of each successive āmnaya); more mundane feelings of pleasure are considered approximations of the experience occurring in the final stages of realization.

antaryāga: lit., "internal sacrifice"; A key concept in both Kaula and Samaya interpretations of Śrīvidyā and in Tantrism in general, **antaryāga** refers to the process by which all forms of overt action are transformed into mental, contemplative acts. According to some Śrīvidyā adepts, this transformation of "outward" action or "sacrifice" (i.e., **bahiryāgas**) into "inward" contemplation obviates the need to continue "outward" practices such as ritual and even meditation. This is the position of Lakṣmīdhara. Others,

such as Bhāskararāya, dispute this interpretation and maintain that "outward" acts are never abandoned in favor of pure contemplation.

adhikāra: lit., "qualification"; Any individual undertaking a Tantric spiritual discipline is rated by the guru according to ability, personal temperament, capacity to learn. The guru then responds with teachings deemed appropriate to the "qualification" of the student.

ardhahakāra: lit., "half the letter 'h'"; An obscure and technical term in Tantrism used to indicate the female organ both literally and symbolically as it is made a part of ritual and meditative practice. Presumably the term comes from the shape of the upper portion of the letter **h** as it occurs in the Devanagari script.

āvārana: lit., "obstruction"; Used in Śrīvidyā in the compound **navāvāraṇa** or "nine obstructions" to indicate the nine passages or stages in the **śrīcakra** that are identified with the nine sub-cakras. The idea is that each **āvāraṇa** is overcome by ascending stages of ritual and contemplation as the adept moves towards the goal of union symbolized in the **bindu** at the center of the **śrīcakra**.

bahiryāga: lit., "external sacrifice"; Any type of ritual, performance, verbal or mental effort which involves material elements and explicit actions part of the spiritual discipline. In Śrīvidyā, forms of **bahiryāga** are said to be transformed into "internal sacrifice" (**antaryāga**) in a gradual process of ritual assimilation and contemplative practice.

bhāṣya: lit., "commentary"; Any written or verbal commentary on texts or oral teachings. A variation of this word, **bhāṣa**, is used in the compound **sandhyabhāṣa** or "twilight language". This purposefully metaphorical, shadowy language, prominent in Buddhist texts, is used to conceal and encode Tantric materials in order to prevent their use or comprehension by non-initiates. It is not favored by Hindu Tantrics who prefer a technical vocabulary that frequently attributes specific meanings to common words.

bhakti: lit., "loving devotion"; One of the most common and important concepts in Hinduism. In general **bhakti** refers to the reciprocal relationship of love, friendship and reliance existing between a devotee and a divinity. In the case of Śrīvidyā, **bhakti** plays a central role in virtually all forms of ritual expression and as a key element in personal faith.

The central object of devotion is the beneficent figure of the goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī.

bhūprasatīra: lit.,"spread over the earth"; The term refers specifically to the two-dimensional form of the **śrīcakra** either as it is written in a temporary form on the physical earth or on some other object, or as it is inscribed on some more permanent substance such as a sheet of five metals (**pañcalokam**).

bindu: lit., "drop"; In the most specific and common sense of the term, **bindu** refers to the central point within the **śrīcakra** symbolizing the non-dual nature of the union of Śiva and Śakti. It can also refer to semen in esoteric discussions of certain ritual performances practiced by Kaula adepts.

cidākāśarahasya: lit., "the secret of consciousness and space"; This is the so-called **Cidambaram rahasya** or "secret of Cidambaram", that is, the **yantra** of the dancing form of Śiva known as Naṭarāja ("King of Dance") as it is found in the temple dedicated to this god in Citamparam, Tamil Nāḍu. The term itself is given various esoteric meanings. Cf., Chamu, S.V., The Divine Dancer. Mysore: Astanga Yoga Vijñāna Mandiram, 1982.

dakṣiṇācāra: lit., "right (-hand) practice"; As Lakṣmīdhara understands it this term indicates Tantric practices which do not employ any ordinarily prohibited substances, such as the **pañcamakāras**, or promote any form of worship which may lead to a breach in the conventional standards of orthodoxy associated with high-caste behavior (such as the **kāmakalā** meditation). Lakṣmīdhara's is the "popular" sense of term though it is not universally accepted; Bhāskararāya, for example, rejects this meaning perhaps because as a Brahmin he did not consider himself outside the orthodox fold and yet did not feel constrained by these prohibitions. Bhāskararāya suggests the difference between the so-called "right" and "left-handed" practices is based on a technical understanding of different levels of spiritual awareness.

darśana: or **darśan**, lit., "sight"; Referring the practice of coming within the view of any respected figure including within view of an image or god. **Darśan** has been treated elsewhere (See reference to Eck, Diana L. in Bibliography) but key to our understanding is that a **darśan** is an exchange of glances, both a "seeing" and a "being seen".

deśācāra: lit., "custom of the region"; An especially important concept for understanding the ways in which

Śrīvidyā manifests in particular places by adopting and assimilating into local culture. Many of the practices common to Śrīvidyā in a particular area are without a Sanskritic or pan-Indian basis and thus indicate the influence of local or regional factors.

dhyānaśloka: lit., "meditation verse"; These poetic verses describe the physical and sometimes metaphysical characteristics of particular aspects of Hindu divinities. They are the centerpiece of meditative efforts and are usually associated with particular mantric aspects of a god as well. The most common of the **dhyānaślokas** of Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī has been given in the chapter concerning her **sthūla** or physical form.

dīkṣā: lit., "initiation"; The necessary first step in any Tantric spiritual discipline is to gain access to teaching through a qualified teacher (usually defined as descending from a lineage of least three traceable generations) and thus any instruction within this formal relationship can be considered part of the initiation process. **Dīkṣā** itself usually refers to the specific giving of mantras that officially recognizes the participation of an individual within a lineage of teachings and teachers.

dīkṣanāma: lit., "initiated name"; A "special" name given at initiation into the Śrīvidyā mantra that becomes the spiritual identity of an individual in his or her capacity as a qualified adept. Many historical figures in Srividya tradition are known only by their **dīkṣānāmas** rather than by their given names. While the concept is adopted into Śrīvidyā from an ancient and common Vedic practice, all the **dīkṣanāmas** in Śrīvidyā end with the epithet **-ānandanātha** (lit., "blissful lord") though the **-nātha** portion is sometimes dropped. See PKS, 1.40 where this is specified as an injunction. The tradition continues up to the present though in some lineages **dīkṣānāmas** are considered optional and may not be given.

dvija: lit., "twice-born"; Refers to any member of the upper three estates (the so-called **traivarṇikas**) of ancient Aryan society because of a rite of passage in which they receive a form of Vedic initiation and are thus "born again" into the Vedic life. Though the particular ritual is limited to males, the term applies to both genders of these high castes. In contemporary Tamil Nāḍu the term effectively applies only to Brahmins. One of Tantrism's major characteristics is that it does not limit access to initiation on the basis of a "twice-born" birth.

gāyatrī: In general, a Vedic meter of twenty-four syllables but specifically the name of a mantra which is actually a verse from the Ṛg Veda (see 3.62.10) and considered the most sacred of all Vedic utterances. On the structure of this verse is built any number of other **gāyatrīs** for other divinities; a common practice among Tantrics and especially prevalent with respect to mantras ascribed to local aspects of divinity.

hādi: lit., "beginning with **ha**"; The term used for the so-called Lopamudrā tradition and the specific version of the Śrīvidyā mantra associated with it because it begins with the syllable **ha**. Though there is some controversy over the exact form of the mantra there is a consensus at least that it begins with the syllable **ha**.

iṣṭadevata: lit., "the desired (or chosen) deity"; Namely that specific aspect of a deity favored by an individual and singled out as representative of the general concept of God. Thus, at one level, Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī is the **iṣṭadevata** of Śrīvidyā tradition inasmuch as she represents the chosen form of the supreme Śakti. But each Śrīvidyā adept may identify a local goddess, such as Madurai Mīnākṣī, as their own **iṣṭadevata** and hence take that version to represent both Lalitā and Parāśakti.

jñāna: lit., "knowledge"; In Śrīvidyā, as in other non-dualist schools, **jñāna** is the liberative insight one gains through spiritual discipline in which the individual soul (ātman) it seen as identical to the Absolute.

kādi: lit., "beginning with **ka**"; The Śrīvidyā mantra in its most popular form begins either its fifteen or sixteen syllable form with **ka**. This is the so-called Kāmarāja or Manmatha tradition in which the mantra's form was fixed and passed in a lineage descending from Śiva in his Kāmarāja aspect.

kailāsa: The name of the mountain home of Śiva and Kubera but represented in Śrīvidyā by the three-dimensional form of the **śrīcakra**. Thus any three-dimensional **śrīcakra** is sometimes called a **kailāsa** cakra. **Meru** and **sumeru** are identical terms for the same concept.

kalā: lit., "aspect", "part", "bit", "digit of the moon"; Used in a number of ways in Śākta Tantrism, the basic sense relates to the division of the phases of the moon into sixteen portions. These sixteen aspects are identified with various other parts of the **śrīcakra**, the human body and the universe.

kāmakalā(dhyāna): lit., "(meditation) on the aspect of desire"; A technical reference to a complex form of meditation in which the female organ becomes literally or figuratively the center of ritual attentions. This is a central part of the Kaula tradition's worship and is performed in order to emphasize the overcoming and restraint of sensual pleasures and the proximate bliss of sexual relations to that of the final realization of the Absolute. Samaya and other conservative elements within Śrīvidyā reject this form of meditation either outright or as an external form (i.e., as a **bahiryāga**) of practice.

khaḍgamālā: lit., "the garland of the sword"; Actually a list of the names of the various deities of the **śrīcakra** in the order of their identification. The **khaḍgamālā** is recited as a contemplative act of devotion or as a substitute for more elaborate forms of **śrīcakra** worship. The recital of the **khaḍgamālā** is one of the most popular forms of worship in contemporary traditions. It takes its name from the sword symbolizing the goddess's power to strike down desire, hatred and delusion; the names themselves are, in the words of one adept,"strung together like flowers on a garland."

kuladevata: lit., "the deity of the **kula** (or family)"; This is the particular aspect of divinity favored within specific groups---all designated by the encompassing term "**kula**". Thus one of the names for Śrīvidyā is **Śrīkula** and the **kuladevata** is Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī; it may also refer to a particular family's chosen deity or the traditional deity associated with the village of their origin.

kuṇḍalinī: lit., "winding", "spiral"; The esoteric term used to refer to the latent spiritual power envisioned in the form of a snake wound three times about the spiritual center (**mūlādhara cakra**) at the base of the spine. In the processes of **kuṇḍalinī yoga** this power, identified with Śakti, gradually rises up the central channel (i.e., the main **nāḍī** called the **suṣumṇā**) of the body (located in the region of the spine) and passes through six (or in Śrīvidyā, nine) particular centers called **cakras**. Upon reaching uppermost center (though technically not considered a **cakra**) the **sahasradalapadma**, literally the thousand petalled lotus, **kuṇḍalinī** is said to be fully extended and hence in perfect union with Śiva who resides at the pericap of the skull. This esoteric physiology partly explains the various levels of spiritual and material achievement associated with continuing yogic practice and links physical forms of practice with mental counterparts.

kūṭa: lit., "peak"; Used in Śrīvidyā to refer to the three portions or "peaks" of the Śrīvidyā mantra.

madya: lit., "wine"; One of the five prohibited substances, that is, one of the **pañcamakāras** or **mapañcakas**. Used as a part of Tantric ritual wine is intended to approximate the feeling of well-being that is associated with the final bliss (**ānanda**) of realization. As any intoxication, ritual or otherwise, deliberately violates the norms of high caste behavior and the use of wine thus distinguishes this ritual practice as a "higher qualification" according to its Kaula Tantrics proponents.

madhyamā: lit., "the middle"; In Tantrism this term is used technically to indicate the second stage in the devolution of sound from its primordial source. Creation is viewed as a product of Brahman in the form of sound and thus **madhyamā** refers to that stage in which sound is at the stage of meta-language and is considered in nearly all respects still pre-articulated. Mantras are the only emanation of this stage of sound considered to have an articulated physical form.

maithuna: lit., "sexual intercourse"; The fifth and most controversial of the **pañcamakāras** or five prohibited substances. Many Tantric schools, including elements within Śrīvidyā, advocated ritual sexual intercourse as an reenactment of the primordial union of Śiva and Śakti. In many cases the wife of the adept is worshipped as the goddess with the culmination of worship being copulation; in other cases, intercourse with unknown women is "preferred". Though accepted and even advocated by a number of contemporary lineages, the practice of the fifth **makāra** is seen to be extremely limited (if at all present) in south India. Many conservative lineages either reject its appropriateness outright or claim that the superior qualification required for its practice is no longer found.

māmsa: lit., "meat"; The second of the **pañcamakāras**, the ritual ingestion of meat in violation of the usual standards of Hindu orthodoxy is another aspect of Tantrism's deliberate effort to go beyond the limits of ordinary convention in order to bring about a sudden and radical personal transformation.

mantraśāstra: lit., "treatises (or teachings) on mantras"; The body of literature and teachings that list, codify and explain the use and formulation of mantras. Śrīvidyā adepts have gained renown for their knowledge and mastery of the **mantraśāstra**.

mata: lit., "conviction", "tradition", "school", "doctrine"; One of many terms indicating these meanings (others include **ācāra**, **sampradāya**, **mārga**, **kranta**, etc.), **mata** is usually attached to the terms **kādi** and **hādi** in order to indicate the particular mantric teachings associated with each. In this case, however, it does not seem the term carries with it the notion of a "school" as it does when used in the compounds, **Śrīmata** or **Kālīmata**. As we have observed, the key issue is not which general term is used as the second member of a compound but rather which specific term is used to govern it.

matha: lit., "school of learning", "monastery", "ascetic's dwelling"; Used in this study specifically with reference to the two prominent centers of the Śaṅkara tradition in south India, namely, at Kāñcipuram in Tamil Nāḍu and at Śṛṅgeri in Karnāṭaka.

matsya: lit., "fish"; Another of the five prohibited substances (**pañcamakāras**) used during certain Kaula rituals including Kaula forms of **śrīcakra pūjā**.

meru: Sometimes, **sumeru**, is the name of the bejewelled mountain at the center of the universe around which all the planets revolve. In Śrīvidyā tradition it is identified with the **śrīcakra** in its three-dimensional form, thus the term **meru cakra** is used to indicate the three-dimensional **śrīcakra** and identifies it with Mount Meru. See **kailāsa**.

mūlamantra: lit., "root-mantra"; Every particular deity in each of its aspects has a mantra (or mantras) identified with its final or ultimate subtle (**sūkṣma**) nature. Often the term is used to indicate the "highest" form of a deity and the particular mantra identified with that form. (Thus distinguishing, for example, the mantra of Mahāgaṇapati from any other "lesser" aspect of the same god.) In the case of Śrīvidyā tradition the root-mantra of Lalitā is either the fifteen syllable mantra known as the **pañcadaśī** or **pañcadaśākṣarī** (in one of its twelve forms, including the popular **kādi** and **hādi** versions) or the sixteen syllable mantra known as **ṣoḍaśī** or **ṣoḍaśākṣarī**.

mudrā: lit., "seal", "stamp", "gesture"; One of the important ritual elements of Tantrism, **mudrās** are usually hand gestures which invoke, symbolize and "seal" a relationship between the person performing them and the divinity. Each **mudrā**'s significance is multivalent while the actual form can differ according to interpretation. In Śrīvidyā there are nine specific **mudrās** shown before each of

the nine sub-cakras (and identified with them as aspects of the presiding deities) and one **mudrā** meant to encompass the others or represent the supreme aspect of the goddess, viz., the **trikhaṇḍa mudrā.**

mudrā: lit., "fermented or parched grain"; One of the five prohibited substances (**pañcamakāras**) used in Kaula influenced Tantric rituals. Various grains are used in preparations that cause them to ferment and thus have an intoxicating effect.

naivedya: Any offering of food, cooked or otherwise, presented to a deity usually at the conclusion of ritual worship.

nibandha: lit., "binding", "compendium", "ritual handbook"; One of the two terms (the other is **paddhati**) used to indicate the ritual codification of a particular lineage or tradition and supply, as it were, the liturgy for all occasions. One of the most famous **nibandhas** of the pan-Indian Kaula school is the **Nityotsava** of Umānandanātha which codifies and presents the ritual formulas suggested by the **Paraśurāmakalpasūtra.** In Śrīvidyā tradition, Umānanda has been known the title **nibandhakāra**, the "composer of the handbook". **Nibandhas** and **paddhatis** are unpretentious, straightforward compendia with little elaboration or explanation accompanying the text. The intentions of the work are clear only to those with an "insider's" knowledge of the practical aspects of the tradition but they are revealing of at least the theoretical dimensions of a lineage's interpretations. Like many liturgies, however, there is room for interpretation, interpolation and revision, thus the **nibandhas** are not in themselves perfect reflections of the actual practice of a particular group or lineage.

nityā: lit., "eternal", "permanent"; In Śrīvidyā the term **nityā** is identified with the sixteen deities which embody the phases of the moon and thus the days of the fortnight. They are identical to the so-called **tithis** or the sixteen **kalās** but specifically refer to the deities identified with each of these days or aspects of the moon.

nyāsa: lit., "laying down", "placing", "imprinting", "interidentifying"; A process characteristic of Tantric ritual in which sounds, usually in the form of seed-syllables (**bījākṣaras**), are identified with parts of the human body, deities and yantras in order to form a series of microcosmic/macrocosmic relationships.

paddhati: See **nibandha**.

pañcadaśī: lit., "fifteen", sometimes **pañcadaśākṣarī**, "fifteen syllables"; One of the root-mantras (**mūlamantra**) of Lalitā in her supreme form. The mantra itself is usually not uttered aloud and thus the term is used to specify the mantra without violating its sanctity. The syllables are called **akṣaras**, that is, "indestructible", because they are believed to be aspects of the deity in the subtle (**sūkṣma**) form and thus reduced, as it were, to their most primary level. See **kādi**, **hādi** and **mūlamantra** above for further details.

pañcamakāra: lit., "the five m's", sometimes **mapañcaka**; The so-called five prohibited substances and activities that characterize Kaula influenced Tantric ritual. They are so-called because each term begins with the Sanskrit letter **m**, thus: **madya** (wine), **māṃsa** (meat), **matsya** (fish), **mudrā** (fermented grain) and **maithuna** (sexual intercourse). See each for further remarks.

parā: lit., "transcendent", "supreme"; Here taken with a feminine ending to indicate the goddess in her supreme aspect, namely, in the form of the **śrīcakra**.

parampara: lit., "one following another", "succession", "lineage"; Unlike any of the other terms indicating "tradition", **parampara** specifically indicates a lineage, that is, the succession of tradition from guru to student. There are, in effect, as many lineages as there are teachers though many are bound together in various types of relationships. The core of any Tantric tradition is found only in the **paramparas** since it is at this level that generalities are worked into specifics and teachings of the oral tradition are formulated and passed on.

parāśakti: lit., "supreme **Śakti** or goddess"; The general term used to designate the goddess in her highest aspect, that is, in a position of fundamental superiority encompassing even her consort Śiva. Śāktas do not discount the role of the male consort since he is viewed as a necessary component in the theological scheme. In Śrīvidyā the preferred form of **parāśakti** is Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī though other names are occasionally used and local beneficent aspects are equated with this central figure.

paśyantī: The first, non-articulated aspect of sound as it emanates from its primordial source of Brahman. This concept plays an important role in understanding how Tantrics view the devolution of the universe from a single

source as a parallel sound manifestation. See **madhyamā** and **vaikharī** for further details on the theory.

pītha: lit., "seat", "throne"; Indicating a center of a tradition and the individual who at the present time sits upon this seat of authority, i.e., the **pīthācārya**, or "teacher of the tradition". Used specifically in the present study to designate the Śaṅkara tradition's two major centers in south India at Kāñcipuram and Śṛṅgeri, each of which has a traditional succession of teachers who take the title "Śaṅkarācārya" in order to establish their lineage relationship with the eighth-century Śaṅkarācārya.

prakāśa: lit., "illumination", "manifestation"; Technically used in Tantric discussions to distinguish Śiva's fundamental quality of "pure illuminative being" from Śakti's "reflective being" (**vimarśa**). Metaphysically, Śiva is considered insentient, eternal and hence, the purely "illuminative" source of creation while Śakti is the active and dynamic "self-reflection" of that one reality (identified as Brahman). It also refers to the Self (**ātman**) before devolving by karma and ignorance (**avidyā**) into a self-conscious, dualistic entity standing in relation to other objects, that is, the Self <u>before</u> it "reflects" (**vimarśa**) upon itself as such.

praṇava: The sacred syllable **auṃ**.

pratinidhi: lit., "representative", "substitute"; In Tantrism a **pratinidhi** is any element prescribed to be used as as representative or substitute for another. This is the common method employed for overcoming the social and practical difficulties associated with the five prohibited substances. It is usually clear, however, that just any substitute is not acceptable and in many cases lists of alternatives are given. Thus in the case of wine prescribed to be drunk at a certain point in the **śrīcakra pūjā**, a concoction of milk, honey and spices is substituted as the **pratinidhi**.

prayoga: lit., "use", "application", "scheme", "prescription"; The term is used in many ways to indicate some method or form of practice or procedure to be followed in ritual, meditation or in other situations. The important case in Śrīvidyā is the use, i.e., the **prayogas** associated with the first forty-one verses of the **Saudaryalaharī** as mantras, accompanied by prescriptions regarding the use of various mantras, offerings and other procedures.

pūjā: lit., "worship", "honor", "adoration", "ritual"; The most common term designating worship of any kind in Hinduism.

śabda: lit., "sound"; Indicating any sound from the most subtle emanation of the primordial absolute, that is, the so-called **śabdabrahman** to the most manifest and vulgar.

sādhana: lit., "accomplishing", "performing", "attainment", "discipline"; The term used to designate the particular spiritual, physical and mental discipline prescribed and implemented according to traditional teachings and following the instructions of a guru. **Sādhana** refers to both the forms of practice and the accomplishment of the discipline. See **siddhi** and **siddha**.

śaiva: A devotee of the male divinity, Śiva. Most Śāktas, that is, devotees of a female divinity are also part of Śaiva traditions and make no absolute distinction between Śākta practices and theology and Śaiva traditions. The difference is more one of emphasis than of strict sectarianism. There are, of course, Śāktas within Vaiṣṇava traditions (certain Pāñcarātrins, for example) but these form a minority within general Śākta Tantra traditions.

samaya: lit., "rule of conduct", "compact", "custom", "convention", "order", "precept"; Used in both a general and specific sense within Śākta traditions and especially after the fifteenth-century Lakṣmīdhara codifies the so-called Samaya Śrīvidyā tradition in order to rid it of Kaula influences such as the ritual use of the **pañcamakāras**. See Part One, Chapter One for an elaborate discussion of the meanings of the term.

saṃhārakrama: lit., "destruction method", "deconstructive perspective"; The manner of envisioning the **śrīcakra** or its ritual worship in which the adept begins with the outermost portions of the diagram and methodically moves towards the central **bindu**. It is called "destructive" or "deconstructive" because in the interpretation of the **śrīcakra** as the symbol and form of the universe the process of reuniting with the Absolute (i.e., achieving unity with Śiva and Śakti) the adept "destroys" the misconceptions of the dualistic world and "dismantles" any sense of separation with the Absolute.

sammelana(cakra): lit., "meeting together", "mixture", "union", or as a compound, "combination diagram"; The term is used specifically to designate the **yantra** associated with the dancing Śiva, Naṭarāja, as he is found within the famous

temple of Citamparam (Tamil spelling, Sanskrit "Cidambaram") in Tamil Nāḍu, India. The **yantra** or **cakra** is called a **sammelana** because it is believed to be a combination of Śiva and Śakti **cakras**; thus Naṭarāja encompasses both theological possibilities and symbolizes their union. The **cakra** is also called the "secret of Cidambaram" (**cidambaram rahasya**) because it is the transcendent form of Nataraja and its actual configuration is obscure and treated as an esoteric aspect of the god. The whole diagram is said (though not proven) to be beneath rows of golden **bilva** leaves which are visible to the naked eye. The "Śiva portion" of the **cakra** is perhaps described by the sixth-century Tamil saint, Tirumūlar in his **Tirumantiram.** The "Śakti portion" (or perhaps the whole of the configuration since the **śrīcakra** is itself a "combination" of Śiva and Śakti **cakras**) is identified by Umāpatiśivācārya as the **śrīcakra.** (See Part One, Chapter Two and Part Two, Chapter Three for details.)

sampradāya: lit., "tradition", "school", "doctrine", "handed down instruction"; The most general term used to designate the concept of a traditional teaching. Śrīvidyā is sometimes called Saubhāgya Sampradāya because it is the tradition which focuses upon and elaborates the concepts surrounding the "beneficent" or "prosperous" (**saubhāgya**) aspect of the goddess. The term is sometimes used in more specific contexts with more narrow meanings to indicate the particular lineage of instruction, that is, the **parampara** within the broader tradition (such as Śrīvidyā). Thus an adept might be asked, "What is your **sampradāya**?", meaning to what lineage of Śrīvidyā (or any other tradition) do you belong. The general sense of the term, however, allows the adept a greater flexibility and discretion in answering such a question.

Śaṅkarācārya: The eighth-century theologian whose interpretations of the major sources of Vedānta tradition are termed the "pure non-dualist doctrine" (**kevalādvaitavāda**) because of his unequivocal position that ultimately the Absolute Brahman is qualityless (**nirguna**) and perfectly identical to the individual soul (**ātman**). Śaṅkarācārya (or Śaṅkara, as he is called, the term **ācārya** designating "teacher" or "master") maintained that theism was a useful and sometimes necessary means of qualifying the Absolute with attributes (**saguṇa**) in order to teach its transcendent identity with the soul. This position met with much opposition within Hindu circles as unbalanced and atheistic. Historically he is said to be responsible for the spread of his interpretations by having established centers of learning (**maṭhas**) throughout India and in the southern region at Śṛṅgeri in Karnāṭaka. According to the

traditions of the **matha** at Kāñcipuram, Tamil Nādu, Śaṅkara settled there after having "conquered the directions" (**digvijāya**, the term used to describe his preaching across the length and breadth of India) and composed his Śākta treatises and commentaries. In variance to the established Śaiva/Śākta traditions in the **maṭhas**, Hacker and other scholars have clearly demonstrated that Śaṅkara could not (or is very unlikely to) have composed these Śākta works. It seems also clear, however, that Śaiva/Śākta, and specifically Śrīvidyā, influences entered into the **matha** traditions sometime after the eighth-century (and before the eleventh-century) and that it is likely that one of the heirs of the Śāṅkara tradition composed these works and attributed them to the master. These disputes have never reached a satisfactory historical conclusion. From at least the fifteenth-century, Śaṅkara is clearly identified with Śrīvidyā tradition and the contemporary Śaṅkara **maṭhas** in both north and south India support the belief that he was a Śrīvidyā adept (but not solely a Śrīvidyā worshipper).

saubhāgya: lit., "good fortune", "prosperity", "auspiciousness", "blessedness", "grace"; The term within Śrīvidyā tradition is generally applied to the beneficent (**saumya**) aspects of the goddess but also to the effects of the practice of the tradition's spiritual disciplines. Thus Śrīvidyā is also known as **saubhāgya sampradāya**, or the "tradition of prosperity".

saumya: lit., "charming", "placid", "gentle", "beneficent"; Used to refer to the so-called **aghora** or "non-fearful" or "not terrifying" aspects of Hindu gods; specifically within Śrīvidyā it refers to the gentle and beneficent aspects of the goddess Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī contrasting to the **ghora** or fearful Kālī or Durgā.

siddha: lit., "accomplished", "adept"; The term is used generally to designate any spiritually accomplished Tantric adept, that is, one who has obtained special insight or powers (**siddhis**); it may also suggest the traditions of rather eccentric, unpredictable adepts, such as the Tamil saint Tirumūlar; these saints' legends and writings reflect the extraordinary abilities attributed to them.

smārta: lit., "followers of the **smṛtis** or recollected scriptures"; The term is applied to the Brahmin castes which in south India draw their essentially Śaiva/Śākta traditions from the so-called **smṛti** body of literature and focus on the "**smārta** series" of divinities, namely, Śiva, Visnu, Śakti (usually designated by the name Durgā but encompassing all

feminine aspects), Ganeśa (or Gaṇapati, the elephant-headed eldest son of Śiva and Śakti) and the Vedic deity Sūrya, the Sun-god. They are distinguished in Tamil Nāḍu from other Śaiva oriented Brahmins who function as priests (the so-called **ādiśaivas**) and sectarian Vaiṣṇava Brahmins.

ṣoḍaśī: lit., "sixteen", "sixteen year-old girl"; Also "sixteen syllables or parts", referring in Śrīvidyā to both the goddess in her youthful form and to a form of the goddess's **mūlamantra** consisting of sixteen syllables or parts. The controversy over the construction of the mantra leads one to conclude that it is an elaboration of the fifteen syllable form of the **śrīvidyā** since the **ṣoḍaśī** occurs in both a strict sixteen syllable form (the so-called "light" or "lesser" **ṣoḍaśī**) and a more elaborate "great" form (**mahāṣoḍaśī**) consisting of two sets of syllables appended to the fifteen syllable **kādi śrīvidyā.**

sṛṣṭhikrama: lit., "creation method", "constructive perspective"; The method of envisioning and worshipping the **śrīcakra** beginning with the innermost **bindu** and proceeding in an outward direction through the triangles, lotus petals and outer gateways.

sthūla: lit., "gross", "physical"; Used in Tantrism to refer to the physical, anthropomorphic images of deities and to suggest that these forms are "vulgar" in comparison to mantras (the subtle or **sūkṣma** forms) or yantras (the transcendent forms).

sūksma: lit., "subtle", "refined", "precise"; The mantric aspects of deities are referred to as their "subtle" (**sūkṣma**) forms because they are considered hierarchically superior to the physical, anthropomorphic aspects. Bhāskararāya refines this notion in his discussion of the Śrīvidyā mantra by referring to its "subtle", "subtler" and "subtlest" aspects.

tattva: lit., "reality", "fact", "metaphysical category", "that-ness"; According to Śākta Tantrism the categories of the constituent elements of the material world, called **tattvas**, number thirty-six. This concept of categorizing the fundamental material and mental substances is adopted and expanded upon from the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems and perhaps from earlier Kashmiri Śaiva discussions. See **HT**, p.52f. for a complete list and discussion.

traivarṇika: lit., "three estates"; See **dvija** which has the identical meaning.

trikoṇa: lit., "three sides", "triangle"; Any triangle may be designated by the term **trikoṇa**, however, in Śrīvidyā the term is frequently used in the specific sense to designate the innermost triangle of the **śrīcakra**, that is, the **sarvānandamayacakra**.

twice-born: See **dvija**.

upacāra: lit., "service", "worship", "offering", "requisite articles"; In the specific sense of Tantric ritual, **upacāra** refers to the presentation of various substances such as flowers, food, sandlewood paste, **kumkum** powder and other auspicious articles near the conclusion of external worship (i.e., during **pūjā** or **bahiryāga**). These vary in number and follow differing prescriptions according to lineage traditions. According to **PKS** there are sixty-four prescribed **upacāras**. The **naivedya** or food offerings are a separate part of the formal **pūjā** but are generally considered under this term.

upāsana: lit., "sitting near", "worshipping", "attending", "spiritual discipline"; The term is multivalent since it suggests both loving devotion (**bhakti**) and concentrative awareness directed towards a particular deity following a specified spiritual practice (prescribed by the guru). Thus it has both a specific sense and a more general one suggesting any form of worship or devotion. The literal meaning of the term is useful for understanding its Tantric sense: the devotee or adept (i.e., the **upāsaka**) by "sitting beside" the deity draws closer to its nature through various acts of spiritual discipline. So long as a sense of distinction remains between adept and deity then the term aptly applies to the relationship of "proximity" that is suggested by it literally. The adept also puts him or herself in various metaphorical relationships of identity with the Absolute by positing mental, phyisical and verbal sets relationships that "sit beside" one another.

vaikharī: lit., "speech", "articulated speech"; A technical term used to indicate the third and final phase of the devolution of the Absolute Brahman in the form of sound (i.e., **śabdabrahman**): **vaikharī** when taken with **paśyantī** and **madhyamā** forms the essential triad that explains the gradual formation of the material world from sound. All ordinary forms of language and articulated sound fall into this third category.

vasukoṇa: lit., "bejewelled triangles", "eight triangles"; The term **vasu** in this compound has the esoteric meaning of "eight"; thus the compound refers to the first set of eight

minor triangles of the **śrīcakra** following the innermost triangle (or **trikoṇa**). For a further discussion see Part One, Chapter Six.

vidyā: lit., "knowledge", "science", "mantra"; Another term with many different usages depending upon the context, **vidyā** refers to both mundane and spiritual (i.e., liberative) types of knowledge. But in Śākta Tantrism it is technically used to indicate mantras, especially mantras of female deities. Thus **śrīvidyā** refers to the "knowledge of Śrī (the goddess)", "auspicious knowledge" and specifically the embodiment of that knowledge in the form of the mantra called the **śrīvidyā**.

vāmācara: lit., "left(-handed) practice"; In the ordinary sense **vāmācara** is used to designate those Kaula influenced traditions of Tantrism which prescribe and employ ritually certain esoteric elements, such as the **pañcamakāras** and **kāmakalādhyāna**, that seemingly defy the conventions and standards of Brahmanical orthodoxy. It contrasts with the so-called "right-handed practice" (**dakṣiṇācāra**) which conforms to the usual expectations of Brahmanical society. Śrīvidyā has had both types of practice and no small amount of controversy concerning the appropriateness and value of each.

vimarśa: lit., "reflection", "thought", "deliberation"; Technically used to indicate the fundamental attribute of Śakti within Śaiva/Śākta Tantric theology, **vimarśa** refers to Śakti at the very first moment of self-reflection, that is, as the emergence of self-awareness as such. Since the Self (**ātman**) is eternal and absolutely identical with the primordial, absolute Brahman its ultimate nature is that of non-dualistic, non-reflective "illumination" (**prakāśa**, the attribute of Śiva). However, when the One devolves from its original, pristine condition its first "act" as such is self-cognition of itself---this is identified with Śakti as "reflection" (**vimarśa**).

vṛttatraya: lit., "three circles"; According to the majority of Śrīvidyā interpreters the **vṛttatraya** refers to the three outer circles surrounding the set of sixteen lotus petals on the **śrīcakra**. Bhāskararāya differs from this interpretation and claims the three circles are those that separate the sets of triangles from the lotus petals. His position, it would appear, is based on the ritual interpretation of the **śrīcakra** as an utterly purposeful diagram and since Bhāskararāya sees no ritual place for the three circles as surrounding the lotus petals he reinterprets the ordinary accepted placement of these

circles. This issue is important insofar as the technical point allows the observer to evaluate historical and contemporary followers of Bhāskararāya as authentically interpreting his views. It also sheds further light on the ritual use and construction of the **śrīcakra.**

yoginī: lit., "female attendant", "female yogi"; Technically used within Śrīvidyā to designate the attendant deities of Śakti as they preside (on her behalf) over various parts of the **śrīcakra.** The **yoginīs** are, in fact, merely aspects of Śakti embodying specific powers, principles and concepts which are identified with the adept's own spiritual nature and material achievements.

Selected Bibliography

I. Sanskrit Sources

Ānandalaharī, ed. and trsl. A. Avalon "Wave of Bliss". Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1961. See Saundaryalaharī.

Bhāvanopaniṣad, ed. Sitarama Shastri, in: Kaula and Other Upaniṣads. ed., Sitarama Sastri with an Introduction by Arthur Avalon. Calcutta: University Press 1922 (Tantrik Texts, XI). pp.37-65.

Catuḥśatīsaṃhitā, unedited, also known as the Ānandārṇavatantra, mss.#6017 RASB. See also NCC II, p.102f. Occurs in 480 ślokas.

Chinnamastākhaṇḍa, ed. V.V. Dwiveda as GOS, 166, 1979. This is the fourth khaṇḍa of the Śaktisaṃgamatantra (SST). See SST.

Cidgaganacandrikā, with the commentary by Raghunatha Misra entitled Kramaprakāśika, ed. Raghunatha Misra. Varanasi: Sampuranand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1980 (Sarasvatibhavana Granthamala Vol.115). Attributed to Kālīdāsa but according to Rastogi actually authored by Śrīvatsa and a commentary on a Krama stotra. (See Rastogi, N., Krama Tantrism. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p.180f.;p.195f.;p.257; also edited by Trivikrama Tirtha, Calcutta: University Press, 1936 (Tantrik Texts, XX).

Dakṣiṇāmūrtisaṃhitā, edited at Benares 1937 as No. 61 of the PWSB Texts. The NCC, VIII, p. 297f., records about 50 Mss. Cf.also the CSC Cat., p.34f.

Devībhāgavatapurāṇa, ed. B.M. Pandey. Varanasi, 1963.

Devīmāhātmya, actually a portion of the Markendyapurāṇa, also known as the Durgasaptaśatī, trsl. Swami Jagadiswarananda. Madras: Ramakrishna Mission, 1977 (fifth impression); ed. F.E. Pargiter, in: Markendeyapūrana, Calcutta, 1904; ed. and trsl. (in French) J. Varenne as: "Celebration de la Grande Deesse", Paris 1975. See Durgāsaptaśatī.

Devī-upaniṣad, ed. A. Mahadeva Sastri, in: The Śākta Upaniṣads, Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1950 (ALS, 10), pp.53-60; trsl. A. Danielou, ALB Vol. 19, 1955, pp.77-84; trsl. A. G. Krishna Warrier, The Śākta Upaniṣads, Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1967 (ALS, 89). Also appearing in Śrīvidyā, ed. "Aṇṇa" (in Tamil and Sanskrit), Madras: Ramakrishna Matham, 1982 (third impression). pp.213-218.

Devīyāmala, apparently no extant manuscripts. References, however are copious and warrant mention. See *Tantrāloka*, 22,31;3,70;15,335;31,85f.;also Jayaratha's *Vivarana* on *Tantrāloka* 28,390f. Note *Devīyāmala* is not quoted in the chapter on *kula* worship (*Tantraloka*, 29). Significantly Rameśvara, also known as Aparājitānandanātha, the nineteenth century author of the *Saubhāgyodaya* on the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* quotes this text but it is unclear whether he does so from memory or from a manuscript. See *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (*PKS*).

Durgāsaptaśatī, ed. Pt. Vyankataramatmaja Harikrsnasarma. Delhi: Butala and Co., 1984. Includes seven commentaries in Sanskrit namely, *Durgāpradīpā*, *Guptāvatī*, *Caturdhari*, *Śantanavi*, *Nagojibhatti*, *Jagaccandracandrikā* and *Damsoddhara*. Most significant of these is Bhāskararāya's *Guptāvatī*.

Gayatrītantra, ed. Tarakanatha Bhattacarya. Varanasi 1946 (Kasi Skt. Series, 143).

Īśanaśivagurudevapaddhati by Īśānaśiva, ed. T. Ganapati Sastri, in 4 vols. Trivandrum: Trivandrum Unversity Press, 1922-25 (Triv. Skt. Series, 69,72,77,83).

Iśvarapratyābhijñakārikā of Utpāladeva with his *vrtti*, ed. M. K. Shastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1921 (KSTS, 34).

Iśvarapratyabhijna Vivrtti Vimarśinī of Abhinavagupta with the *Bhāskarī*, ed. M. K. Shastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1938-1943 (KSTS, 60, 62,65).

Jñānadīpavimarsinī by Vidyānandanātha also known as Śrīnivāsabhaṭṭa but not the same author as of the *Rjuvimarśinī* on the *Nityāsodaśikārnava* (*NSA*); (See *Vāmakeśvaratantra* (*VT*)), incomplete in manuscript, Nepal Cat.,II, p.15; Trivandrum Cat., No. 912B. Text is quoted by Amṛtānanda in his *Dīpikā* on the *Yoginīhrdaya* (second part of the *Vāmakeśvaratantra*), p.16, (See *Yoginīhrdaya*).

Jñānārnavatantra, ed. G.S. Gokhale. Poona: Anandasrama, 1952 (AnSS, 69);also edited by P. Ch. Bagchi in: *Kaulajñānanirnaya and some minor texts of the school of Matsyendranātha*. Calcutta: University Press, 1934 (Calcutta Sanskrit Series, 3).

Kādimata(tantra), See *Tantrarājatantra*. Referred to under this title in several works over the centuries, cf. Amrtananda's *Dīpikā* on *Yoginīhrdaya*, p.8. (See *Yoginīhrdaya*).

Kādambarī by Bāṇa, ed. and trsl. M.R. Kale. Bombay: Nirnaya

Sagar Press, 1968 (fourth edition); trsl. C.M. Ridding. London 1896, reprinted 1974.

Kālikāpurāṇa, ed. Biswanarayanan Sastri. Varanasi 1972; see also van Kooy, Worship of the Goddess.

Kālīvilāsatantra, ed. Pt. Ch. Tarkatīrtha. Calcutta: University Press, 1917 (Tantrik Texts, VI).

Kāmakalāvilāsa by Puṇyānanda, ed. and trsl. A. Avalon. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1953, second edition; also appearing as ed. and trsl. by J. Woodroffe. Calcutta: University Press, 1921 as Tantrik Texts X; also reprinted Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1971 in: J. Woodroffe, Tantrarāja Tantra and Kāmakalāvilāsa, pp.129-245, including the commentary of Naṭānandanātha entitled Cidvallī (on this commentator see R. Krishnaswami Aiyar in the fourth edition of Kāmakalāvilāsa, p.132). This edition is extremely faulty in notes and printing errors, as Goudriaan attests. (See Goudriaan, Hindu Tantra and Śākta Literature, p.168, ftn.20. Here he also lists other editions.). Numerous other editions not listed are available in India including the recent one by Srī Pītambarapīta Sanskṛta Pariṣad, Nagpur 1979, which also includes the Cidvallī of Natananda with some variations from the Woodroffe edition.

Kaulajñānanirṇaya, ed. P. Ch. Bagchi, in: Kaulajñānanirṇaya and Some Minor Texts of the Schools of Matsyendranatha, Calcutta: University Press, 1934.

Kulārṇavatantra also known in quotations as the Ūrdhvāmnāyatantra (See Kṣemarāja on Netra Tantra 16, 34 and 18, 119) but not to be mistaken under this secondary title with other works of the same name, ed. T. Vidyaratna, Calcutta: University Press, 1917 (Tantrik Texts, V); second edition, Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1956; cf. G. Carlstedt, Till Kulas Lov. Kulamāhātmyakathana ur Kulārṇavatantra, Uppsala 1974; the same, Studier i Kulārṇava-Tantra, Uppsala 1974 contains a critical edition of chapters one and two. For other particulars see NCC, IV, p.244f. Chakravarti's reference to a Kulārṇavatantra or Kulācārarahasya occurring in 12 chapters is undoubtedly a different work. See ABORI 13, p.208f. Ch. Chakravarti, "Kularnava Tantra: Its Extent and Contents", ABORI 13, 1931-32, p.206-211.

Lakṣmīdharī, being the commentary of Lakṣmīdhara on the Saundaryalaharī. See Saundaryalaharī (SL).

Lalitārcanacandrikā by Sundarācārya also known as Saccidānandanātha the guru of Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa (aka Vidyānandanātha or Śrīvidyānandanāth). Mss. obtained from

the University of Madras, Dept. of Sanskrit. See Kaviraj, Tantrika Sahitya (in Hindi) for details of mss., p.572.

Lalitāsahasranāma(stotra) with the Saubhāgyabhāskarabhāṣya of Bhāskararāya, ed. by the Srī Pītāmbarapītā Sanskṛta Pariṣad. Nagpur: Sri Pitanbarapita Sanskrta Parisad, 1982; also ed. M. K. Shastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1935; trsl. R. Ananthakrishna Sastry. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1976 (fifth reprint). It should be noted that Ananthakrishna Sastry's translation is incomplete and omits much of the Sanskrit original.

Mahānirvāṇatantra, ed. and trsl. A. Avalon, "The Great Liberation". Calcutta: University Press, 1913 (Tantrik Texts, XIII); fifth edition 1952, reprinted Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1963.

Mahārthamañjarī by Maheśvarānanda, ed. M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1918 (KSTS 11); translated into French by L. Silburn. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1968.

Mālinīvijayatantra, ed. M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1922 (KSTS, 37).

Mantramahodadhi by Mahīdhara, ed. K. Srikrsnadas. Bombay: Sri Sat Guru Publications, 1962; recently reedited and translated in two separate volumes by "a panel of scholars". Delhi: Sri Sat Guru Publications, 1984.

Mṛgendratantra (Vidyāpāda and Yogapāda), ed. M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1930 (KSTS 50).

Navāvaraṇakīrtanas by Muttusamidīkṣitar, ed. University of Madras. Madras: University of Madras Publications, 1977. See Zvelebil, K. V., Tamil Literature, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1973.

Netratantra with the Uddyota of Kṣemaraja, ed. M.K. Sastri, 2 vols. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1926-39 (KSTS 46 and 61). See Brunner, Netra Tant[illegible]

Nityāṣodaśikārṇava(tantra), ed. V.V. Dwiveda. Varanasi: Sampuranand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, 19[illegible]8 (with two Sanskrit commentaries, Ṛjuvimarśinī and Artt[illegible]tnāvalī); ed. Poona: Anandāśrama, 1908 (AnSS, 56) with t[illegible]anskrit commentary Setubandha of Bhāskararāya.

Nityotsava by Umānandanātha also known as Jagannathapāṇḍita (but not the famous logician of the same name or the Hindi poet), ed. A.M. Sastri. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1923 (GOS, 23), revised edition by Swami Trivikrama Tirtha.

Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1948.

Padārthadarśa by Raghavabhatta. See Śāradātilaka.

Paramārthasāra by Abhinavagupta, ed. (with a French trsl.) L. Silburn. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1957.

Paraśurāmakalpasūtra with the commentary by Rāmeśvara Sūri entitled Saubhagyodaya, ed. A.M. Sastri and S.Y. Dave. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1950, second edition (GOS 22).

Parimala by Maheśvarānanda. The auto-commentary on the Mahārthamañjarī. See above.

Paratrimśikā with the Vivarana of Abhinavagupta, ed. M.K. Sastri. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1918 (KSTS 18).

Prapañcasārasārasaṃgraha, ed. at Varanasi, V.S. 1935=C.E. 1878 (IOL-SB, III, p.1946); also recently as part of the Tanjore Sanskrit Library Series in two volumes, 1983.

Prapañcasāratantra attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, ed. T. Vidyaratna. Calcutta: University Press, 1914 (Tantrik Texts, III); with the Sanskrit commentary Vivarana attributed to Padmapada edited in Calcutta: University Press, 1935 (Tantrik Texts, XVIII-XIX).

Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya of Kṣemarāja, translated under the title The Secret of Recognition with notes by E. Baer and Kurt F. Leidecker. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1938.

Śaktisaṃgamatantra, ed. (in four volumes) B. Bhattacharyya. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1932-47 (vols. I-III) (GOS 61, 91, 104). Vol. I: Kālīkhanda; Vol. II: Tārākhanda; Vol. III: Sundarīkhanda; Vol. IV: Chinnamastākhanda, ed. V.V. Dwiveda. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1979 (GOS 166).

Śaktisūtras, ed. M.D. Sastri. Varanasi 1938, in: SBG 10, pp.182-187; ed. K.V. Abhyankar, as Appendix II to Hayagrīva's Śāktadarsana, Poona: Ānandāśrama, 1966. This text seems to structure itself on the Śivasūtras but has had none of the same influence as the latter on the development of Śākta thought.

Śāradātilaka by Lakṣmaṇadeśika, ed. M.J. Bakshi, with the Sanskrit commentary Padārthadarśa by Raghavabhatta, Varanasi 1963 (Kasi Skt. Series, 107).

Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa by Pūrṇānanda (= the sixth chapter of the author's Tattvacintamani), ed. T. Vidyaratna. Calcutta: University Press, 1913 (Tantrik Texts, II); trsl. A. Avalon,

in: The Serpent Power, Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1958, sixth edition (new edition New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974).

Saubhāgyabhāskara of Bhāskararāya, commentary on the Lalitāsahasranāma. See Lalitāsahasranāma.

Saubhāgyakalpadruma attributed to one Mādhavānandanātha. Better known through its summary by the author's pupil Kṣemānandanātha called Saubhāgyakalpālatikā. For manuscript references see RASB No. 6338, 6339 and G. Kaviraj, Tāntrika Sāhitya, p.712f. According to Kaviraj mss. are incomplete. Private copies consulted during research were also incomplete.

Saubhāgyaratnākāra of Śrīnivāsabhaṭṭa (aka Śrīvidyānandanātha), presently being edited by Dr. G. Sundaramoorthy of Madurai, Tamil Nāḍu. For manuscripts see Nepal Cat., I, p.LXXVI, 269; Bikaner Cat., p.610; also Kaviraj, Tāntrika Sāhitya, p.714f.

Saubhāgyasubhagodaya, undoubtedly by Amṛtānanda despite colophons attiributing it to Vidyānandanātha (See Amrtananda on Yoginīhṛdaya 2,17). Many verses may, in fact, be quotations of Puṇyānanda, Amṛtānanda's guru. Ed. V.V. Dwiveda in his edition of Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, pp.306-321. Also known under the title Saubhāgyasudhodaya.

Saubhāgyodaya by Rāmeśvara, the commentary on Paraśurāmakalpasūtra. See Paraśurāmakalpasūtra.

Saundaryalaharī attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, ed. and trsl. W. Norman Brown. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958 (Harvard Oriental Series, 43); ed. Vidvan N.S. Venkatanathacharya. Mysore: Oriental Research Institute, 1969 (Mysore Oriental Research Institute Series, 114) including the Lakṣmīdharī of Lakṣmīdhara; ed. A. Kuppuswami. Mylapore, Madras: A. Kuppuswami, 1976 (with nine Sanskrit commentaries, Hindi and Tamil renderings of verses, translation and notes in English, Tamil, prayogas, yantras, etc.); ed. and trsl. with commentary, diagrams and an appendix on prayoga Pt. S. Subrahmanya Sastri and T.R. Srinivasa Ayyangar. Adyar, Madras: Guhananda Mandali, 1977.

Setubandha by Bhāskararāya, the commentary on the Vāmakeśvaratantra, including both Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava and Yoginīhṛdaya. See Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava.

Śrīkuñcitāṅghristava by Umāpatiśivācārya, ed. into a Tamil-Sanskrit edition by Brahmasri Ka. Mi. Rājakaneca Tīkṣitar. Citamparam, Tamil Nāḍu, India: Śrī Naṭarāja Trust, 1958.

Śrīvidyā, (a paddhati of Śrīvidyā tradition) ed. by "Aṇṇā".

Madras: Ramakrishna Mission, 1981.

Śrīvidyāratnākaraḥ with shrisaparyamantrabhasyawanchhankalpatalaksharchana and allied subjects by Swami-Shrihariharanandasaraswati (Shrikarapatraswami) Maharaj, ed., Shrisitaramkaviraj "Shrividyabhaskar" (Dattareyanandnath). Calcutta: Bhaktisudha Sahitya Parishad, c.1958(?).

Subhagodaya by Śivānanda, ed. V.V. Dwiveda in his edition of Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, pp.284-296.

Subhagodya attributed to Gauḍapāda, ed. Delhi, 1983. A vastly different work than the one authored by Sivananda. Text consulted had no proper references.

Sundarīmahodaya attributed to Śaṅkarānandanātha (aka Sambhubhatta), supposedly based on the Jñānārṇavatantra and composed as a nibandha. See IOL Cat., IV, p.899f; RASB Cat., p.520f.

Svacchandatantra with the Uddyota of Kṣemarāja, ed. M.K. Sastri, 7 vols. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1921-35 (KSTS 31, 38, 44, 48, 51, 53, 56).

Tantrāloka by Abhinavagupta with the Vivaraṇa of Jayaratha, ed. M.K. Sastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press 1921-38 (KSTS, vols. 27-39); reedited by N. Rastogi, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985; trsl. (into Italian) R. Gnoli "Luce delle sacre scritture". Torino 1972. Note that this Italian translation depends heavily on Jayaratha's interpretation.

Tantrarājatantra, Part I (chs. 1-18) ed. Laksmana Sastri. Calcutta: University Press, 1918 (Tantrik Texts, VIII); Part II (chs. 19-36) ed. Sadashiva Misra, Calcutta: University Press, 1926 (Tantrik Texts, XII); reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981 in one volume.

Tantrasāra by Abhinavagupta, ed. M. R. Sastri. Srinagar: Govt. Press, 1918 (KSTS 17); trsl. (into Italian) R. Gnoli "Essenza dei Tantra". Torino 1960.

Tripurārahasya, ed. Mukunda Lala Sastri, Varanasi 1932 (KSS, vol. 92). Private mss. consulted.

Tripurātāpini-upaniṣad, ed. A. Mahadeva Sastri in: The Śākta Upaniṣads. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1950 (ALS, 10), pp.11-52; trsl. A. G. Krishna Warrier, in: The Śākta Upaniṣads. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1967 (ALS, 89).

Tripurā-upaniṣad, ed. A. Mahadeva Sastri in : The Śākta Upaniṣads. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1950 (ALS, 10),

pp.1-10; also with the commentary of Bhāskararāya in *Kaula and Other Upaniṣads*, Calcutta: University Press, 1922 (Tantrik Texts, XI). For manuscript editions consulted for the translation included in this dissertation see the Introduction to Appendix One. Also translated without commentary by A. G. Krishna Warrier in: *The Śākta Upaniṣads*. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1967 (ALS, 89).

Vāmakeśvaratantra, the name attributed to the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* and the *Yoginīhṛdaya* when grouped as a single text. See each respectively.

Varivasyarahasya by Bhāskararāya with his auto-commentary entitled *Prakāśa*, ed. and trsl. S. Subrahmanya Sastri. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1968, third edition, (ALS, 28).

Vijñānabhairavatantra, ed. and trsl. (in French) L. Silburn. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1961 (Publications de l'Inst. de Civilisation Indienne, serie in-8, fasc. 15).

Yoginīhṛdaya(tantra), ed. G. Kaviraj. Varanasi: Sampuranand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, 1963, second edition, (Sarasvati Bhavana Granthamala, 7) with the Sanskrit commentaries *Dīpikā* by Amṛtānanda and *Setubandha* by Bhāskararāya.

Selected Bibiliography

II. Books, Articles and Disserations of Modern Authors

Adiceam, Margueite E., Contribution a l'étude d'Aiyanar-Sasta. Pondicherry: Institut Francais d'Indologie, 1967.

Agrawala, V.S., "The Glorification of the Goddess", in: Purāṇa, V, 1, January, 1963.

Aiyangar, S. Krishnaswami,"Madurai-Talavaralaru (An account of the temple of Madura)" in: Indian Historical Records Commission, Proceedings of the Meetings 6, 104-16.

Aiyar, R. Sathyanatha, History of the Nayaks of Madura. ed. by S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar). Madras: Oxford University Press, 1924.

Alston, A.J., Śaṁkara on the Absolute. London: Shanti Sadan, 1980.

Altekar, A.S., The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation from Prehistoric Times to the Present Day. Benares: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint edition, 1956.

"Āmnāya", An Anonymous survey of the Āmnāyas, in: Candi, Vol. 35, 5-6, Prayag, 1976.

Appadurai, Arjun, Worship and Conflict Under Colonial Rule: a South Indian Case. Cambridge: University Press, 1981.

____________, and Carol A. Breckenridge,"The south Indian temple: authority, honour and redistribution" in: Contributions to Indian Sociology (NS) 10, 187-211.

Avalon, A. (see also Sir John Woodroffe), The Garland of Letters (Varṇamāla). Madras: Ganesh and Co., Sixth edition, 1974.

__________, Principles of Tantra. The Tantratattva of Śrīyukta Śiva Candra Vidyārṇava Bhattacharya. Madras: Ganesh and Co., Third edition, 1960.

__________, The Serpent Power, Being the Ṣatcakranirūpana and the Padukapanchaka. Calcutta-London 1913 (Tantrik Texts II); Madras: Ganesh and Co., Tenth edition, 1974.

__________, and E. Avalon, Hymns to the Goddess. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1952, reprinted 1973.

Awasthi, S.S. Shastri, Mantra aur Mātrkāon kā Rahasya. Varanasi: Chaukhamba, 1966 ("The Secrets of Mantras and Matrkas", in Hindi).

Bagchi, P. Ch.,"Evolution of the Tantras" in: CHI, Vol.IV: The Religions, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Publications Second Edition 1956, pp.211-226.

Bagchi, P. Ch., Studies in the Tantras. Vol. I, Calcutta: University Press, 1939.

Baliga, B.S., Madras District Gazetteers: Madurai. Madras: Govt. Press., Not dated.

Banerjea, Jitendra Nath, The Development of Hindu Iconography. Calcutta: University Press, 1956.

________________________, Pauranic and Tantric Religion. Calcutta: University Press, 1966.

________________________, "Some Aspects of Sakti Worship in Ancient India", in: Prabuddha Bharata, 59, March, 1954, pp.227-232.

Banerji, S.C., Tantra in Bengal. A Study in Its Origin, Development and Influence. Calcutta: University Press, 1978.

Basham, A.L., The Wonder That Was India. New York: Grove Press, Twenty-first printing 1977.

Beane, W.C., Myth, Cult and Symbols in Śākta Hinduism: A Study of the Indian Mother Goddess. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977.

Beck, Brenda E.F., "The goddess and the demon: a local south Indian festival and its wider context" in Puruṣārtha 5, pp.83-136.

Betelille, Andre, Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Sratification in a Tanjore Village. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

Beyer, Stephan, The Cult of Tārā. Magic and Ritual in Tibet. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University Press, 1973.

Bharati, A., The Ochre Robe. Seattle: Univeristy of Washington Press, 1962.

__________, The Tantric Tradition. London: Rider and Co., 1965; Revised American Paperback Edition, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1975.

Bhati, Desrajsimha, Vidyāpati ki Kavya-sadhana, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962 (in Hindi).

Bhattacharya, H., "Tantrik Religion", in: The Imperial Age of Kanauj. (HCIP, IV) Bombay 1965, pp.314-326.

Bhattacharyya, N.N., History of the Śākta Religion. Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal, 1974.

________________, Indian Mother Goddess. Calcutta: Indian Studies, Past and Present, 1971.

Bhuler, George, trsl., The Laws of Manu. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1886. [Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXV.]

Bohtlingk, Otto von und Roth, Rudolph, Sanskrit-worterbüch. 7 Vols. St. Petersburg: Buchdr. der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1855-1875.

Bose, M.M., The Post-Caitanya Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal. Calcutta: University Press, 1930.

Bose, D. and H. Haldar, Tantras, their Philosophy and Occult Secrets. Calcutta: University Press, 1956 Third Edition.

Breckenridge, Carol A., "Madurai sthanikars: mediators of royal culture" in: A.V. Jeyechandrun (ed.), The Madurai Temple Complex. Madurai: Arulmighu Meenaksi Sundaresvarar Tirukkoil, 1974.

Briggs, G.W., Gorakhnath and the Kānphata Yogis. Calcutta 1938; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Reprint 1982.

Brown, Cheever Mackenzie, God as Mother: A Feminine Theology in India. [Forward by Daniel H.H. Ingalls.] Harford, Vt.: Claude Stark and Co., 1974.

Brunner, Helene, "Importance de la littérture Āgamique pour l'étude des religions vivantes de l'Inde" in: Indologica Taurinensia 3-4, Torino 1977, pp.107-24.

________________, "Le sādhaka, personnage oublie du Sivaisme du sud" in: Journal Asiatique 263, pp.411-443.

________________, "Un Tantra du Nord: Le Netra Tantra" in: BEFEO, vol.61, 1974, pp.125-197.

Brunner-Lachaux, Helene, trsl. and ed. Somaśambhupaddhati. Le rituel quotidien dans la tradition śivaite de l'Inde du Sud selon Somaśambhu. 3 Volumes. Pondicherry: Institut Francais d'Indologie, 1963, 1968, 1977.

Buchanan, Francis, A Journey from Madras Through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, Vol.1. London: Cadell & Davies-Black, Parry & Kingsbury, 1807.
Buck, Harry M. and Yocum, Glenn E., edd., Structural Approaches to South India Studies. Chambersburg, Pa.: Wilson Books, 1974.

Buitenen, J.A.B. van, Yāmuna's Āgama Pramanyam, or treatise on the validity of Pancaratra. Madras: Ramanuja Research Society, 1968.

Burgess, James, "The ritual of the temple of Rāmeśvaram" in: Indian Antiquary 12, pp.315-326.

Carlstedt, G., Studier i Kulārṇava-Tantra. Uppsala 1974.

_______________, Till Kulas Lov, Kulamāhātmyakathana ur Kulārṇava. Uppsala 1974.

Cenkner, William, "The Śaṅkarācāryas and Hindu orthodoxy in comtemporary perspective" in: Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Asian Studies 4, pp.785-796.

Chakravarti, Ch., The Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literture. Calcutta: University Press, 1963.

_______________, "Antiquity of Tantrism", in IHQ, Vol. VI, 1930, pp.114-126.

_______________________________, "Controversy regarding the authority of the Tantras", in: Commemorative Essays presented to K.B. Pathak. Poona: Anandasrama, 1934, pp.210-220 (no editor listed).

Clothey, Fred W., The Many Faces of Murukan: The History of a South Indian God. The Hague: Mouton, 1978.

Cole, H.H., Great Temple to Śiva and His Consort at Madura (Preservation of national monuments, India). 1884.

Das, S.K., Śakti or Divine Power. Calcutta: University Press, 1934.

Das, U.K., Bhartīya Śaktisādhana, Vol.II.. Santiniketan: University Press, 1966.

Das, Veena, Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Das Gupta, S.B., Bhārater Śaktisādhana o Śākta Sāhityā. Calcutta: University Press, Second edition, 1966.

Dasgupta, S.B., Obscure Religious Cults as Background of Bengali Literature. Calcutta: University Press, 1962, Second edition.

________________, An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism. Calcutta: University Press, 1950.

Dasgupta, S.N., A History of Indian Philosophy. 5 vols. Cambridge: University Press, 1922-1955.

Devakunjari, D., Madurai Through the Ages: From the Earliest Times to 1801 A.D. Madras: Society for Archaelogical, Historical and Epigraphical Research No date.

Diehl, Carl Gustav, Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India. Lund: Gleerup, 1956.

Dimmitt, Cornelia and van Buitenen, J.A.B., edd. and trsls., Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978.

Dimock, E.C., The Place of the Hidden Moon. Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Dumont, Louis, Une sous-case de l'Inde du sud: orginisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar. Paris: Mouton, 1957.

____________, Homo Hierarchicus: the Caste System and its Implications. London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; originally in French as Homo Hierarchicus, essai sur le système des castes. Paris 1966.

Dwiveda, V.V., Tantra-Yatra, Essays on Tantra-Āgama Thoughts and Philosophy, Literature, Culture and Travel. Varanasi: Ratna Publications, 1982 (In Sanskrit).

____________, Upodghāta (Introduction) to the edition of the Nityāsodaśikārnava (In Sanskrit). See Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava in this Bibliography under Sanskrit Sources.

Eliade, M. Le Yoga, immortalité et liberté. Paris: Librairie Payot, 1954; translated into English by William K. Trask as Yoga, Immortality and Freedom. Princeton: University Press, 1958, (Bollingen Series LVI).

________, Forgerons et alchimistes. Paris 1956.

Evola, J., Le Yoga tantrique. Sa métaphysique, ses pratiques. Trsl. from Italian by M. Robinet, Paris 1971.

Farquhar, J.N., An Outline of the Religious Literature of India. Reprint edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968.

Filliozat, Pierre-Sylvain, "Le droit d'entrer dans les temples de Śiva au XI siecle" in: Journal Asiatique 263, pp.103-17.

Frauwallner, E., Geschichte de indischen Philosophie. 2 Vols. Salsburg 1953-56.

Fuller, C.J., "Gods, priests and purity: on the relation between Hinduism and the caste system" in: Man (NS) 14, pp.459-476.

___________, "The divine couple's relationship in a south Indian temple: Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara at Madurai" in: History of Religions 19, pp.321-348.

___________, Servants of the Goddess. The Priests of a South Indian Temple. Cambridge: University Press, 1984.

Ghosh, A. Bh., "The Spirit and Culture of the Tantras" in: CHI, Vol.IV 1956, Second edition, pp.241-251.

Glassenapp, H. van, "Tantrismus und Saktismus" in: Ostäsiatische Zeitschrift, Neue Folge, b. XII, 1936, pp.120-133.

Gnoli, R., "Gli Āgama scivaiti nell'India settentrionale" in: Indologica Taurinensia, I, Torino 1973, pp.61-69.

__________, Luce delle sacre scritture (An Italian translation of Abhinavagupta's **Tantrāloka**). Torino 1972.

Gode, P.K., Studies in Indian Literary History. 3 Vols. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1953-56.

Gonda, Jan, Change and Co[illegible]uity in Indian Religion. The Hague: Mouton, 1965.

__________, Die Religionen Indiens. 2 Vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960-63.

__________, "The Indian Mantra" in: Oriens 16, 1963, pp.244-297. Reprinted in J. Gonda, Selected Studies IV. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, p.248f.

___________, Medieval Religious Literature (A History of Indian Literature, Vol.II, fasc.1, ed. by J. Gonda). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1975.

Goody, Jack, The Domestication of the Savage Mind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Goswami, B.B. and S.G. Morab, Chamundeśvarī temple in Mysore. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India (Memoir no. 35). No date.

Goudriaan, T., Māyā Divine and Human. A Study of Magic and its Religious Foundations in Sanskrit Texts... Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

Goudriaan, T. and Sanjukta Gupta, Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature (A History of Indian Literature, Vol.II,fasc.2). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1981.

Gough, Kathleen, "Brahman kinship in a Tamil village" in: American Anthropologist 58, pp.826-853.

Gupta, Sanjukta, Dirk Jan Hoens and Teun Goudriaan, Hindu Tantrism. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 2.Abt.: Indien, 4.Band, 2. Abschnitt). Leiden-Koln: E.J. Brill, 1979.

Gupta, Sanjukta, "Viśvaksena The Divine Protector" in: WZKSO, Vol.XX 1976, pp.75-89.

Hacker, Paul, "Eigentümlichkeiten der Lehre ud Terminologie Śaṅkaras: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, Māyā, Iśvara", in: ZDMG C, pp.246-286.

______________, Untersuchungen uber Texte des fruhen Advaitavāda, I. Die Schüler Śaṅkaras. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1951. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1950, Nr.26.

__________, "Die Lehre von den Realitätsgraden im Advaita-Vedānta", in: ZMR. 1952, pp.277ff.

__________, "Śaṅkara der Yogin und Śaṅkara der Advaitin", in: WZKSO, 1968-69, p.119ff.

__________, "Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkarabhāgavatpāda" in: New Indian Antiquary, April-June, 1947.

Hart, George L., "Women and the sacred in ancient Tamilnad" in: Journal of Asian Studies 32, p..233-250.

Hartmann, C.G., Aspects de la déesse Kālī dans son culte et dans la littérature indienne. Helsinki 1969.

Hawley, John Stratton and Wulff, Donna B., edd., The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India. Berkeley:

Berkeley Religious Studies Series 3, 1982.

Heestermann, J.C., "Reflections on the significance of the **dakṣiṇā**" in: IIJ 3, pp.241-258.

_______________, "Brahman, ritual and renouncer" in: WZKSO 8, pp.1-31.

_______________, "India and the inner conflict of tradition" in: Daedalus 102, 1, pp.97-113.

Hoek, A.W. van den, "The goddess of the northern gate: Cellatamman as the °divine warrior'of Madurai" in: Marc Gaborieau and Alice Thorner (eds.), Asie du sud: traditions et changements. Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1979.

Hudson, Dennis, "Śiva, Mīnākṣī, Visnu-- reflections on a popular myth in Madurai" in: Indian Economic and Social History Review 14, pp.107-118.

Hume, Robert Earnest, The Thirteen Pricipal Upanishads. London: Oxford University Press, 1958. Reprint of the revised second edition of 1931.

Ingalls, Daniel H.H., "Śaṃkara on the Question Whose is Avidyā'?", in: PEW, 1953, pp.68ff.

_______________, "Śaṃkara's Arguments against the Buddhists", in: PEW, 1954, pp.291-316.

Jacob, Col. G.A., A Concordance to the Principal Upanishads and Bhagavad Gītā. Reprint edition, Delhi: Motital Banarsidass, 1963.

Kakati, B.K., The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā. Gauhati: University Press, 1948, second edition of 1961.

Kane, P.V., History of the Dharmaśāstra. 5 Vols., Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 1930-62, Reprinted 1968-77.

Kaviraj, Gopinath, Tantra o Āgama-Śāstrer Digdarśan. Calcutta: 1963 (Calcutta Skt. Collete Research Series, No. XXV; Studies, No. 12; in Bengali).

_______________, Tāntrik Vāṅmaya me Śāktadṛṣṭi. Patna: Bihar Rastrabhasa Parisad, 1963 (in Hindi).

_______________, Tāntrika Sādhana aur Siddhānta. Patna: Bihar Rastrabhasa Parisad, 1979 (in Hindi)

_______________, Tāntrika Sāhitya, Lucknow: Rajarsi

Purusottam Das Dandan Hindi Bhavan, 1972 (in Hindi).

Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda. 2 Vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925. (Harvard Oriental Series, 31 and 32.)

__________, trsl., The Veda of the Black Yajus School entitled Taittiriya Samhita, Vol.2. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Kramrisch, Stella, The Hindu Temple. Calcutta: University Press, 1946.

__________, Manifestations of Shiva. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1981.

__________, The Presence of Śiva. Princeton: University Press, 1981.

Logan, Penelope, "Domestic worship and the festival cycle in the south India city of Madurai". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: University of Manchester.

Lord, Albert B., The Singer of Tales. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960.

Lorenzen, D.N., The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas, two Lost Saivite Sects. Reprint edition, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972.

Luders, H., "Die Ṣoḍaśakalāvidyā" in: Philologica Indica, pp.509ff.

Matsubara, Mitsunori, "The Early Pañcarātra with Special Reference to the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā". Unpublisned Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1973.

Mencher, Joan P., "Namboodiri Brahmans-- an analysis of a traditional elite in Kerala" in: Journal of Asian and African Studies 1, pp.183-196.

Menon, C.A., Kālī-worship in Kerala. Madras 1959 Second edition.

Monier-Williams, M., Religious Thought and Life in India: Vedism, Brahmanism and Hinduism. Reprint editon, New Delhi: Oriental Books, Reprint, 1974.

Mookerjee, A., Tantra Art: Its Philosophy and Physics. New Delhi 1968.

Nandi, R.N., Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan

(c. A.D. 600-A.D. 1000). New Delhi 1973.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

Oldenberg, H., Die Religion des Veda. Stuttgart-Berlin 1917 Second edition.

Padoux, A., "Contributions à l'étude du Mantraśāstra. I: La selection des mantra (mantroddhara)" in: BEFEO, 65, 1978, pp.65-85.

__________, Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de la parole dans certains textes tanriques. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1964.

Palaniappan, K., The Great Temple of Madurai. Madurai: Sri Meenakshisundareswarar Temple Renovation Committee, 1970.

Pandey, K.C., Abhinavagupta, An Historical and Philosophical Study. Varanasi: Chaukhanba Publication, reprint 1963, Second edition.

Payne, E.J., The Śāktas. Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House and London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

Pillai, J.M. Somasundaram, Tiruchendur: the sea-shore temple of Subrahmanyam. Madras: Addison Press, 1948.

Pensa, C., "Considerazioni sul tema della bipolarita nelle religioni indianne" in: Gururājamañjarikā, Studi in onore di Giuseppi Tucci Vol.II, Napoli 1974, pp.379-409.

Pope, G.U. trsl. and ed., The Tiruvacagam or 'Sacred utterances' of the Tamil poet, saint and sage Manikka-vacagar. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900.

Pott, P.H., Yoga en Yantra in hunne beteenkenis voor de Indische archaelogie. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1946. English version: Yoga and Yantra. Their Interrelation and Their Significance for Indian Archeology. The Hague: E.J. Brill, 1966.

Pratyagātmānanda, Swami, "Tantra as a Way of Realization" in: CHI, Vol.IV, Second revised edition, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1953-62, pp.227-240.

Raghavan, V., "Methods of Popular Religious Instruction in South India", in: The Cultural History of India, ed. Haridass Bhattacharyya. 4 Vols. Second revised edition, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1953-62.

Vol.IV, pp.503-514.

Raman, K.V., Śrī Varadarajaswami temple-- Kāñchi: a study of its history, art and architecture. New Delhi: Abhivava Publications, 1975.

Rao, T.A. Gopinath, Elements of Hindu Iconongraphy. 2 Vols. Madras: Law Printing House, 1914; Reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985.

Rastogi, N., Krama Tantrism. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

Rawson, P., The Art of Tantra. London 1973.

Redfield, Robert, The Primitive World and Its Transformations. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1953.

Renou, L., Études Védiques et Pāninéennes. 17 Vols. Paris: de Boccard, 1955-1967. Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne fasc. 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30.

Sastri, H. Krishna, South-Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses. Madras: Govt. Press, 1916.

Sastri, K.A. Nilakanta, Development of Religion in South India. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1963.

Sastry, T.V. Kapali, Sidelights on the Tantra. Pondicherry 1971.

Schomerus, H.W., Der Çaiva-Siddhānta, eine Mystik Indiens. Leipzig 1912.

Schrader, F.O., Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā. Adyar, Madras: Adyar Library, 1916.

Shankaranaryanam, S., Śrī Chakra. Pondicherry: Dipti Publications, 1970.

Sharma, Dasharatha, "Verbal Similarities between the Durgā-Sapta-Satī and the Devī-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa and other Considerations bearing on their Date", in: Purana, V, 1, January, 1963, pp.90-103.

Sharma, P. Kumar, Śakti Cult in Ancient India (With Special Reference to the Puranic Literature). Varanasi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1974.

Shulman, David Dean, Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and

Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition. Princeton: University Press, 1980.

Silburn, L., Le Bhakti, Le Stavacintāmani de Bhattanarayana. Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1979.

__________, Le Mahārthamañjarī de Maheśvarānanda avec des extraits du Parimala. Traduction et Introduction. Paris: Editions E. De Boccard, 1968.

__________, Le Vijñāna Bhairava. Paris: Editions E. De Boccard, 1961.

Sinha, Jadunath, Shakta Monism: The Cult of Shakti. Calcutta: Sinha Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1966.

Singer, M., When a Great Tradition Modernizes. London: Pall Mall, 1972.

Sircar, D.C., The Śākta Pithas. Calcutta: University Press, 1973 Second edition; reprint edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.

__________, ed., The Śakti Cult and Tārā. Calcutta: University Press, 1967.

__________, text and translation, Tantrasāradhrta dhyānamālā. in: JAIH, Vol. VI parts 1-2, 1972-1973. Calcutta.

Smith, W.C., Faith and Belief. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

__________, The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind. New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, 1964. First published New York: Macmillan, 1963.

Srinivas, M.N., Social Change in Modern India. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

__________. "The Changing Position of Indian Women" from: The T.H. Huxley Memorial Lecture delivered at the London School of Econonmics. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Subrahmaniam, K., Brahman Priest of Tamil Nadu. New York: John Wiley, 1974.

Sundaramoorthy, G., Śaivism (Based on Tamil Tradition). Kuala Lampur: Malaysia Hindu Sangam.

_______________, Caiva Camayam (Tamil Marapai Ottiyatu). Madurai: Sarvotaya Ilakkiyap Pannai, 1977. (In Tamil)

_______________, Vadamoli Nurkalil Caiva Cittantam. Madurai: Sarvotaya Ilakkiyap Pannai, 1977. (In Tamil)

Tiwari, Jagdish Narain, Goddess Cults in Ancient India. Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1986.

Trautmann, Thomas R., Dravidian Kinship. Cambridge: University Press, 1981.

van der Leeuw, G., Religion in Essence and Manifestation. trsl. by J.E. Turner with Appendices to the Torchbook edition incorporating the addition of the second German edition by Hans H. Penner. 2 Vols. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1963.

Venkataraman, K.R., "Sakti cult in South India" in: CHI, Vol.IV, 1956 Second edition, pp.252-259.

Wadley, Susan S., "Women and the Hindu Tradition" in: Wadley, Susan S. and Doranne Jacobsen, Women in Inida: Two Perspectives. Columbia, Mo.: South Asian Books, 1977.

Weber, Max, The Religion of India. New York: Free Press 1967.

Winternitz, M., Geschichte der indischen Literatur. 3 Vols., Leipzig 1908-1922.

_______________, "Die Tantra und die Religion der śākta", in: Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, IV, 1915/16, pp.153-163.

_______________, "Notes on the Guhyasamāja-Tantra and the Age of the Tantras" in: IHQ 9, 1933, pp.1-10.

Woodroffe, Sir John (See also Arthur Avalon), Shakti and Shakta. Essays and Addresses on the Shakta Tantrashastra. Madras: Ganesh and Co., Reprinted eighth edition, 1975.

_______________, Tantrarāja Tantra. A Short Analysis. in: Tantrarāja Tantra and Kamakalavilasa. Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1971.

Zvelebil, K.V., The Poets of the Powers. London 1973.

_______________, Tamil Literature. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1974 (A History of Indian Literature, ed. by Jan Gonda, Vol.X, fasc.1).

_______________, Tamil Literature. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975

(Handbuch der Orientalistik, II-2-I).